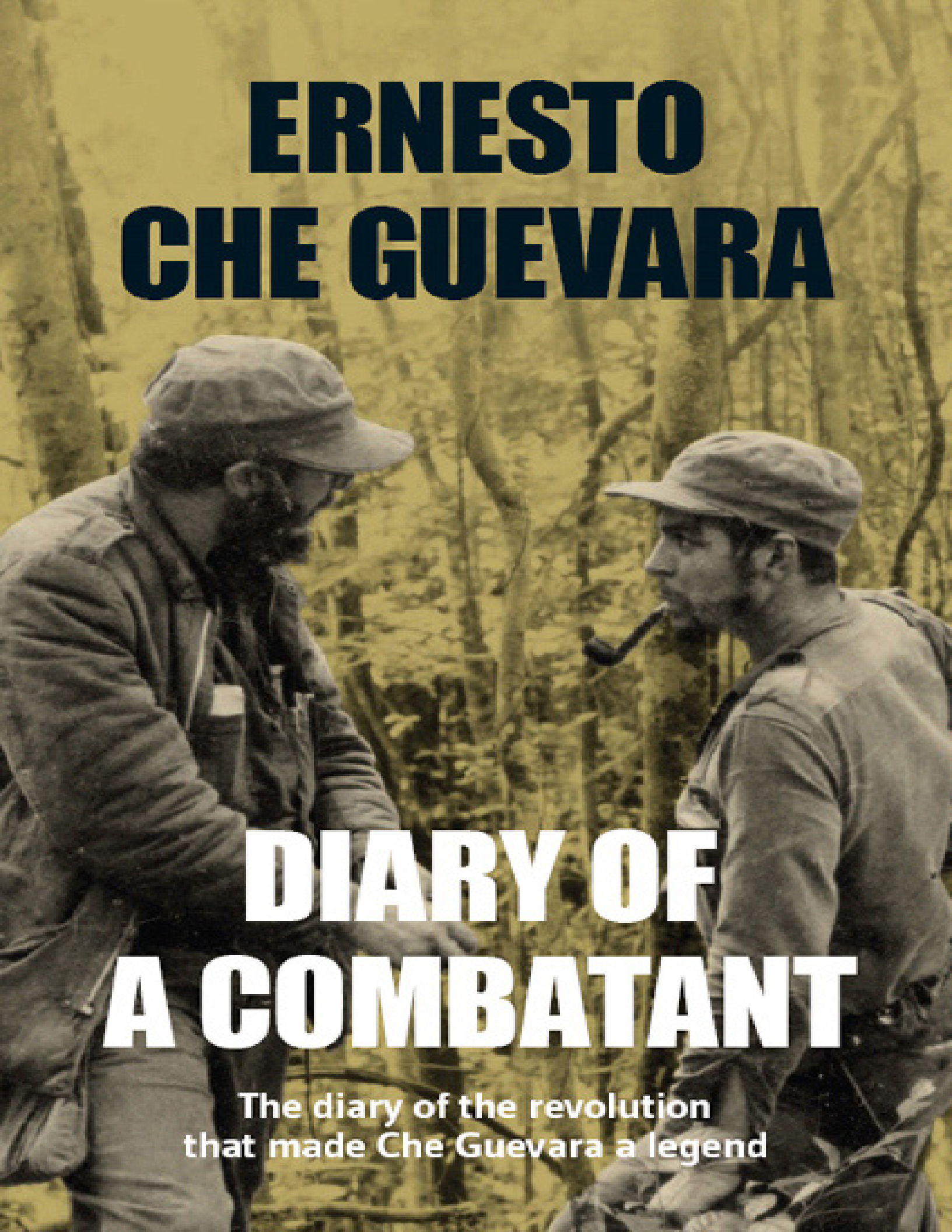
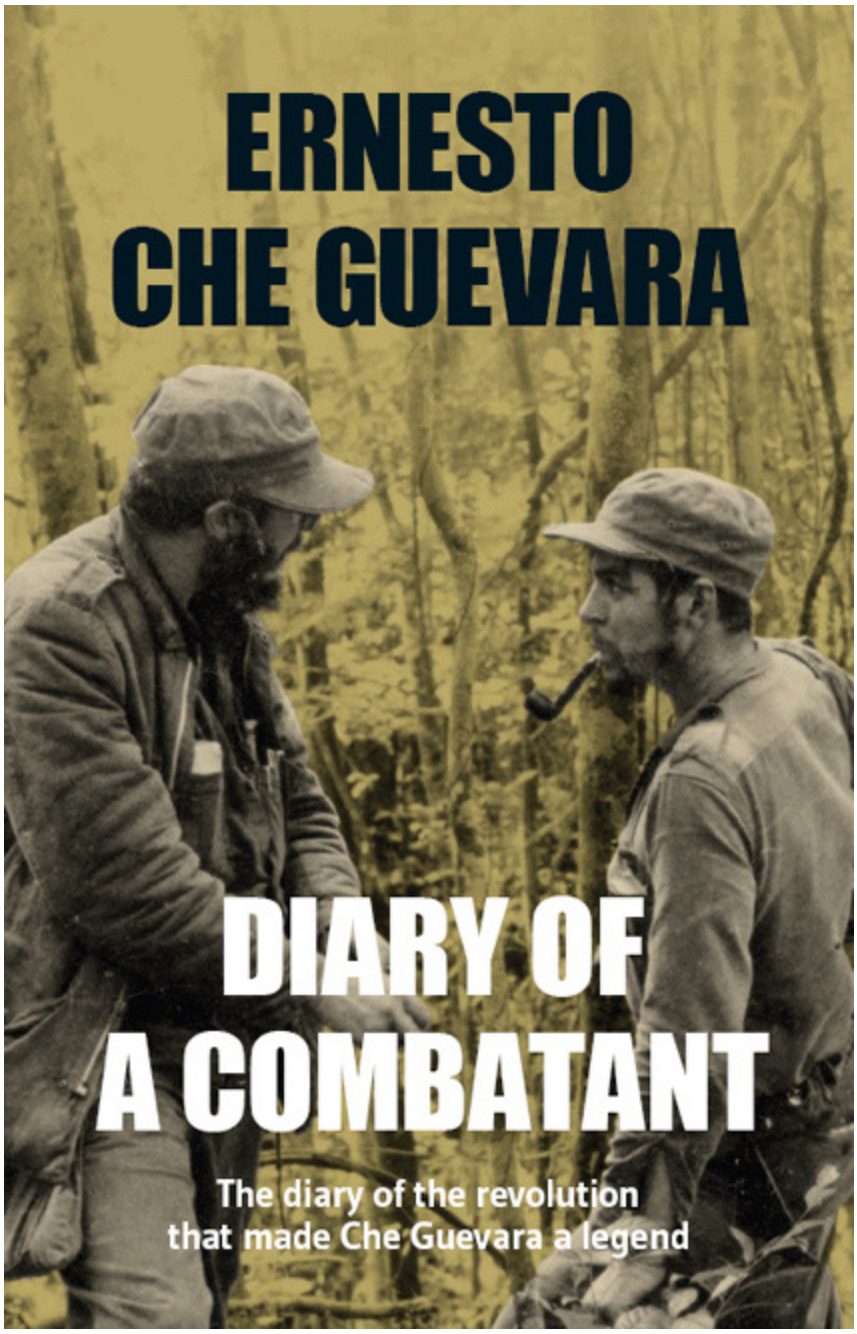
ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA



DIARY OF A COMBATANT

The diary of the revolution
that made Che Guevara a legend


ERNESTO
CHE GUEVARA
DIARY OF
A COMBATANT
The diary of the revolution
that made Che Guevara a legend

Diary of a Combatant

CHE GUEVARA PUBLISHING PROJECT

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Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War (1956–58)
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Diary of a Combatant

From the Sierra Maestra
to Santa Clara,
Cuba 1956-58

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA
EDITED BY MARÍA DEL CARMEN ARIET

Centro de Estudios
CHE GUEVARA

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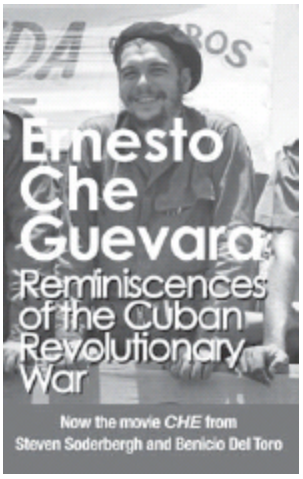
REMINISCENCES OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR
The classic account of the guerrilla struggle in Cuba
Ernesto Che Guevara



The dramatic art and acute perception of Che Guevara's early diaries blossom in this highly readable and entertaining account of the guerrilla movement against the Batista dictatorship that led to the 1959 Cuban revolution.

This new, thoroughly revised edition reveals how this revolutionary war transformed not just a nation struggling against appalling poverty and oppression but Che himself, who begins as troop doctor and ends as a guerrilla commander, who will become a world-famous revolutionary.

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Publisher's note

The editors and translators have done their utmost to clarify and correct this diary—using footnotes where necessary or appropriate. But the reader should keep in mind that Che wrote this diary for his own use, never intending it for publication, and hence he did not always explain or identify references to people, places or events. The reader may therefore find some references confusing or ambiguous. It should also be remembered that Che first arrived in Cuba on the *Granma* and was encountering for the first time idiosyncratic aspects of Cuban culture and language.

Che used this diary as the basis for the articles he wrote for *Verde Olivo* and other publications, articles which subsequently were published as *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*. The publishers therefore suggest the reader consult that book for a more coherent and comprehensive description of events and individuals referred to by Che in this diary.

Fidel Castro's recent memoir in two volumes[1] is also an especially valuable reference for this period of the revolutionary war in Cuba. His books include some particularly useful maps of the various battles.

The publishers therefore urge the reader to regard this book as a primary source for this crucial period of Cuban history.

---

1. Fidel Castro, *La Victoria Estratégica. Por Todos los caminos de la Sierra* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011, and *La Contraofensiva Estratégica* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011.

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

One of *Time* magazine's "icons of the century," Ernesto Guevara de la Serna was born in Rosario, Argentina, on June 14, 1928. He made several trips around Latin America during and immediately after his studies at medical school in Buenos Aires, including his 1951–52 journey with Alberto Granado, on the unreliable Norton motorbike described in his early journal *The Motorcycle Diaries*.

He was already becoming involved in political activity and living in Guatemala when, in 1954, the elected government of Jacobo Árbenz was overthrown in a CIA-organized military operation. Ernesto escaped to Mexico, profoundly radicalized. Following up on a contact made in Guatemala, Guevara sought out the group of exiled Cuban revolutionaries in Mexico City. In July 1955, he met Fidel Castro and immediately enlisted in the guerrilla expedition to overthrow Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. The Cubans nicknamed him "Che," a popular form of address in Argentina.

On November 25, 1956, Guevara set sail for Cuba aboard the cabin cruiser *Granma* as the doctor to the guerrilla group that began the revolutionary armed struggle in Cuba's Sierra Maestra mountains. Within several months, he was appointed by Fidel Castro as the first Rebel Army commander, though he continued ministering medically to wounded guerrilla fighters and captured soldiers from Batista's army. In September 1958, Guevara played a decisive role in the military defeat of Batista after he and Camilo Cienfuegos led separate guerrilla columns westward from the Sierra Maestra.

After Batista fled on January 1, 1959, Guevara became a key leader of the new revolutionary government, first as head of the Department of Industry of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform; then as president of the National Bank. In February 1961 he became minister of industry. He was also a central leader of the political organization that in 1965 became the Communist Party of Cuba. Apart from these responsibilities, Guevara represented the Cuban revolutionary government around the world, heading numerous delegations and speaking at the United Nations and other international forums in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the socialist bloc countries.

He earned a reputation as a passionate and articulate spokesperson for Third World peoples, most famously at the 1961 conference at Punta del

Este in Uruguay, where he denounced US President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress. As had been his intention since joining the Cuban revolutionary movement, Guevara left Cuba in April 1965, initially to lead a Cuban organized guerrilla mission to support the revolutionary struggle in the Congo, Africa.

He returned to Cuba secretly in December 1965 to prepare another Cuban-organized guerrilla force for Bolivia. Arriving in Bolivia in November 1966, Guevara's plan was to challenge that country's military dictatorship and eventually to instigate a revolutionary movement that would extend throughout the continent of Latin America.

The journal he kept during the Bolivian campaign became known as *The Bolivian Diary*. Che was wounded and captured by US-trained and run Bolivian counterinsurgency troops on October 8, 1967. The following day he was executed and his body hidden.

Che Guevara's remains were finally discovered in 1997 and returned to Cuba. A memorial was built at Santa Clara in central Cuba, where he had won a major military battle during the revolutionary war.

Chronology of the Cuban Revolutionary War

July 26, 1953 Fidel Castro leads an unsuccessful armed attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago de Cuba, launching the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Batista regime. A simultaneous assault takes place against the army barracks in Bayamo.

December 1953 Ernesto Guevara meets a group of Cuban survivors of the Moncada attack in San José, Costa Rica.

December 24, 1953 Ernesto Guevara arrives in Guatemala, then under the popularly elected government of Jacobo Árbenz.

January–June 1954 While in Guatemala, he studies Marxism and becomes involved in political activities, meeting exiled Cuban revolutionaries.

August 1954 Mercenary troops backed by the CIA enter Guatemala City and begin massacring Árbenz supporters.

September 21, 1954 Ernesto Guevara arrives in Mexico City after fleeing Guatemala. He gets a job at the Central Hospital.

July 1955 Ernesto Guevara meets Fidel Castro soon after the latter arrives in exile in Mexico City after his release from prison in Cuba. He immediately agrees to join the planned guerrilla expedition to Cuba. The Cubans nickname him “Che,” an Argentine term of greeting.

June 24, 1956 Che is arrested as part of a roundup by Mexican police of exiled Cuban revolutionaries.

November 25, 1956 Eighty-two combatants, including Che Guevara as troop doctor, sail for Cuba from Tuxpan, Mexico, aboard the small cabin cruiser *Granma*, led by Fidel Castro.

November 30, 1956 Frank País organizes an uprising in Santiago de Cuba intended to coincide with the arrival of the *Granma* expedition, which has unfortunately been delayed. A wave of repression follows in Oriente province.

December 2, 1956 The *Granma* reaches Cuba at Las Coloradas beach in Oriente province, but the rebels are surprised by Batista’s troops at Alegría de Pío and become dispersed.

December 21, 1956 Che’s group (led by Juan Almeida) reunites with Fidel Castro and his group, and they move deeper into the Sierra Maestra mountains.

January 17, 1957 The Rebel Army with some new peasant recruits successfully takes an army outpost in the battle of La Plata.

January 22, 1957 A significant victory over Batista's forces is scored at Arroyo del Infierno.
February 17, 1957 *New York Times* journalist Herbert Matthews interviews Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra. The same day, the first meeting is held between the urban underground (*llano*) and the guerrillas (*sierra*) of the July 26 Movement since the start of the revolutionary war.
March 13, 1957 A group of students from the Revolutionary Directorate attack the presidential palace and seize a major Havana radio station. Student leader José Antonio Echeverría is killed in this attack.
April 20, 1957 Following a betrayal, four key leaders of the Revolutionary Directorate are assassinated in an apartment at 7 Humboldt Street in Havana.
April 23, 1957 Fidel is interviewed by US journalist Robert Taber and the interview is screened on CBS television the following month.
May 23, 1957 An expedition organized by the Authentic Party on the *Corynthia* lands in northern Oriente province. Almost all the combatants are captured or killed.
May 27–28, 1957 The battle of El Uvero takes place, in which Che Guevara stands out among the combatants.
July 12, 1957 The Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra is released, calling for a broad political front against General Batista and support for the Rebel Army. It is signed by the Fidel Castro, Raúl Chibás and Felipe Pazos.
July 22, 1957 Che Guevara is selected to lead the newly established second column (designated "Column Four") of the Rebel Army and is promoted to the rank of commander.
July 30, 1957 Frank País, the young leader of the July 26 Movement's urban underground in Santiago de Cuba, is killed.
August 20, 1957 Fidel leads Column One (José Martí) in defeating Batista's forces in the battle of Palma Mocha.
September 5, 1957 Anti-Batista forces in the Cienfuegos naval base organize an uprising with the support of the local July 26 Movement. They are brutally suppressed.
September 17, 1957 Che's forces ambush army troops at Pino del Agua.
October 1957 The rebels establish a permanent supply base at El Hombrito in the Sierra Maestra.
October 12, 1957 Batista launches a brutal campaign to destroy the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra.

October 15, 1957 The Authentic Party and most of the main opposition parties sign the Miami Pact, creating the Cuban Liberation Junta. This pact is repudiated by Fidel Castro on behalf of the July 26 Movement on December 14, 1957.
November–December, 1957 The rebels commence a "winter offensive" against Batista's army.
February 16-17, 1958 The Rebel Army wins a significant victory against Batista in the second battle of Pino del Agua.
March 1, 1958 Raúl Castro and Juan Almeida lead columns that open up second and third fronts in Oriente province.
April 9, 1958 A national general strike takes place but is defeated.
May 3, 1958 The national leaders of the two wings of the July 26 Movement (the *sierra* and the *llano*) meet in Mompié to assess the April strike. The leadership is decisively transferred from Havana to the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra, under the direct command of Fidel Castro.
May 25, 1958 Batista launches a military offensive against the Rebel Army, but this fails after two and a half months of intensive fighting.
July 11–21, 1958 A decisive defeat is inflicted on Batista's army in the battle of El Jigüe, significantly expanding the rebels' operational zone in the Sierra Maestra.
July 20, 1958 The Caracas Pact, a unity agreement between opposition political currents, is announced on Radio Rebelde. This establishes a new Civic Revolutionary Front.
August 31, 1958 Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos lead invasion columns west from the Sierra Maestra toward central Cuba, opening new battle fronts in Las Villas province.
November 15, 1958 Fidel leaves the Sierra Maestra to direct the Rebel Army's final offensive in Santiago de Cuba. By the end of the month, Batista's elite troops are defeated at the battle of Guisa.
December 1, 1958 The Pact of Pedrero is signed by Che Guevara on behalf of the July 26 Movement and Rolando Cubela for the Revolutionary Directorate.
December 12, 1958 A unity agreement is reached between the July 26 Movement and the Second Front of the Escambray.
December 28, 1958 Che Guevara's Column Eight initiates the battle of Santa Clara and succeeds in taking control of the city within a few days.

January 1, 1959 Batista flees Cuba. Fidel enters Santiago de Cuba as the military regime collapses. Santa Clara falls to the Rebel Army.
January 2, 1959 Fidel Castro calls for a general strike and the country is paralyzed. The Rebel Army columns led by Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos reach Havana.
January 8, 1959 Fidel Castro arrives in Havana having marched west from Santiago de Cuba.
February 9, 1959 Che Guevara is declared a Cuban citizen.

THE SIERRA MAESTRA
Havana
Matanzas
Santa Clara
Pinar del Río
CUBA
Camagüey
Area of detail
Guantánamo
Santiago de Cuba
MANZANILLO
BAYAMO
Veguitas
Yara
Bueycito
Guisa
Estrada Palma
El Jibaro
Loma del Burro
San Pablo de Yao
El Oro de Guisa
La Botella Peak
Pino del Agua
Bayamesa Peak
Niquero
Las Mercedes
La Montería
Mompié
Altos de Conrado
El Hombrito
La Mesa
Minas del Frío
El Jigüe
Turquino Peak
Mar Verde
Pico Cuba
El Lomón
La Derecha
Caracas Peak
Altos de Espínosa
Cueva del Humo
La Mina
Pico Caracas
Arroyo del Infierno
La Mula
Las Cuevas
El Uvero
Purial
Granma landing
December 2, 1956
Las Coloradas
Alegría de Pío
Pilón
La Plata
Cabo Cruz
To Santiago
40 KILOMETERS
25 MILES

Editor's Preface

The project to publish the works of Che Guevara has been one of the most important contributions developed by the Che Guevara Studies Center toward its objective of researching, studying and disseminating the theoretical and practical legacy Che left during his brief but fruitful life in his chosen vocation as a revolutionary.

This diary, of which only fragments have been published until now, represents a typical example of Che's writing. From a very young age, he always felt a need to record his personal experiences immediately and directly in diaries, some of which record his travels and others, like the one published here, his experiences as a revolutionary. Apart from their literary value, these diaries are of great historical importance not just because they reflect the role he played as an individual, but also because they present a synthesis of his thinking during key moments of the armed struggle in Cuba, from the *Granma* landing on December 2, 1956, until the revolutionary victory of January 1, 1959.

This *Diary of a Combatant*, the title Che himself chose, brings to the reader his first lived experiences in Cuba, our country's culture, identity and political reality. Even when he initially presents a subjective and one-sided appreciation, due to the fact Cuba was still unfamiliar to him, the way he records events and profiles various individuals are faithful testimony of his respect for, and dedication to, the commitment he had made to contribute to the liberation of the Cuban people.

These pages were written in a compact, straightforward and sometimes ironical style, but at the same time with precision and, above all, strict respect for historical truth. One might agree or disagree with some of his comments or assertions, which become clearer and deeper as he better understands Cuba's reality. His analytical vision becomes more complex and more committed to the cause he defends. Even in such personal and intimate writings, his status as a foreigner is not evident save in a few instances because he generally avoids making comparisons. Moreover his attitude was reciprocated by the Cuban combatants, for example on the occasion when he lost his way in the countryside, and how, upon finally reaching the camp, he describes how he felt when he was "greeted with great affection" and "a spontaneous round of applause."

These brief notebooks are quite concise and were only intended for his personal use. He certainly never had the time to flesh out his notes at the

time they were written. Nevertheless, through his account of his life as part of the military effort, the battles and skirmishes, as well as the tragedy of fallen compañeros, one can sense Che's strict respect for the truth. In his preface to *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War,*[1] he urged others writing about these events to adopt the same approach.

The small notebooks in which he wrote his diary served as the basis for his renowned *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*, which revealed a new level in his narrative style, as well as his intellectual and political maturity. The fact that Che's *Reminiscences* had already been published was not the only reason why his *Diary of a Combatant* has not been published before now. One of Che's notebooks is missing and the Che Guevara Studies Center has not been able to locate it. This will be seen in the gap in the sequence of numbered notebooks.

Fidel Castro has also made a major contribution in the recent publication of some of his memoirs of the revolutionary war, as part of his commitment to producing a "rigorous history of the events"[2] in his capacity as the leader and commander. This prompted the Che Guevara Studies Center to reconsider and see the value in publishing this diary even though some parts of it are missing.

The text of Che's diary has been subjected to an exhaustive review, using other sources on that epoch that have identified the correct names and places, in order to rectify Che's mistaken or imprecise references, especially in the early period when he was not familiar with the geography of the area where the events he narrates took place, as well as mistakes he made in the dates of events and names of combatants.

Despite possible errors that might not have been caught in this edition and the absence of some important diary entries, which constitute a challenge for future researchers, an effort was made to compensate with historical documents and footnotes as a way to guide anyone wanting to appreciate the real significance of Che's quest that began on December 5, 1956, with what he described as his "baptism of fire" at Alegría de Pío. As Fidel commented in a war bulletin on the military situation in Las Mercedes on May 26, 1958, "Those who have fallen, and all who will fall, will live on in the ideals of the revolution."

Che Guevara Studies Center
Havana

For further reference, the editors recommend:

Pedro Álvarez Tabío and Heberto Norman Acosta, *Diario de la Guerra*, 2 vols (Havana: Oficina de Publicaciones del Consejo de Estado), 1991.
Fidel Castro, *La Victoria Estratégica* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011.
Fidel Castro, *La Contraofensiva Estratégica* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011.

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1. Ernesto Che Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press), 2006.
2. See Fidel Castro, *La Victoria estratégica* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011 and *La Contraofensiva Estratégica* (Mexico: Ocean Sur), 2011.

Foreword

Che and the Cuban Revolutionary War

The *Sierra* and the *Llano*[1]

Armando Hart

Those reading the pages of this book will see that heroism and complete devotion to the cause of the redemption of humanity are united in Che along with his extraordinary intellectual capacity, talent and grace in describing in detail what others tend to ignore, forget, or put aside in some dusty corner of the memory. Che, in his unbounded sincerity, comparable only to the infinite generosity and solidarity of those souls exceptionally gifted to take up truth and justice in a radical way, left us a written record of everything, or nearly everything, that passed through his refined and caustic intelligence.

We must thank this Argentine Cuban for having recreated his guerrilla life in such a way that, in the future, those who will live long into the 21st century will be able to understand and appreciate the adventures that took place in the mountains of Oriente province during the years when a New Cuba was being forged as the country emerged from its past history and the glories of José Martí and Simón Bolívar.

Some of those writing about Che have presented a one-sided and quite often superficial image of him, obscuring or overlooking nuances. Thus they offer simply a caricature of a past that can only legitimately be approached with intelligence and love. When either is missing, the intimate privilege and joy of exalting what is most noble and transcendent in this history is lost.

I was at the center of the complicated story of the revolution that Che, from his guerrilla trench, describes in these memoirs. I absorbed the revolution's most intimate, contradictory and vital features, they became the marrow of my bones, and I fused them with my own heart.[2]

Those of us who have lived loving this history have a view of it that doesn't get lost in the labyrinth of events or fall into tendentious interpretations. We aspire to reveal what is essential about this history.

In this text there are, from the point of view of the person Che was then, polemics between the *sierra* and the *llano* in which I had the honor to participate from the clandestine trenches of our cities. This forces us to take up matters the roots of which reach into the process of gestation of the

Cuban revolution, of which Che was one of the great forgers. In that period, he reaches his highest peak, together with Fidel and Raúl.

For me it is an honor and a stroke of good fortune that the Che Guevara Studies Center has asked me for comments on this diary, as they are aware of my relation to some of the events described in it and the opinions Che offers about them. The intellectual effort required for me to express in an adequate way that which I carry in my heart is great and complicated. But I should not—must not—evade this task, as I feel I am the depository of truths that can assist a better understanding of Che's greatness, Fidel's originality and some essential aspects of the Cuban revolution.

In my book, *Albadonazo,*[3] I mention an incident that is key to understanding what I would like to say. I wrote:

> Although security principles recommended that any sensitive document travel by a different route than that of the combatants, we were carrying a very valuable load of papers and photographs that were captured by the dictatorship's soldiers and which the regime was able to take advantage of.
>
> Among these was the draft of a letter that I was preparing for Che. I had read it to Fidel, who asked me not to send it, but I nevertheless committed the indiscretion of saving it among my papers. I've always blamed myself for having carried it with me and that all this caused problems for Fidel and Raúl.
>
> I expressed in that letter my point of view about Che's opinion of some leaders of the *llano*. The debate was related to the socialist ideas that had already crystallized in him and that among a lot of us in the *llano* were still in the process of gestation, and not without doubts and contradictions.
>
> At the same time, this fact could not but influence the situation. In evaluating revolutions of national liberation, and the origin and positions of its cadres, certain ideas that did not correspond to the reality and history of our countries had a lot of weight in socialist thought on an international scale.
>
> What is important about this is that, in reality, thanks to Fidel's genius, the Cuban revolution, of which Che was one of the main architects, had already moved in practice far beyond such theoretical disputes. As we debated the revolutionary process that

together we were pushing forward, the roots of those differences were being left behind.[4]

Within a few months of the January 1959 victory, Che, with his exceptional talent, understood with greater clarity than any of us, the root causes of the problems that were besetting the international communist movement and how to confront and enrich the movement theoretically with the experience of the Third World and Latin America.

From 1959, among Che's closest collaborators were compañeros who had had major responsibilities in the *llano*.

Never did these nuances affect the respect that each one of us had for Che; on the contrary, his prestige only grew over the years until he became one of the greatest symbols of revolutionary struggle internationally.

I remember that when a functionary of the US consulate in Santiago de Cuba, with whom the July 26 Movement had had some relations, read the paragraphs of the letter to which I referred above, and which was published by the army, he went to Haydée [Santamaría] and said to her, "María, how is it that Jacinto [Armando Hart's *nom de guerre*] has written this?" To placate him she responded, "But he's attacking Stalin!" Then the US functionary pointed out. "That's not the heart of what he is saying —read it carefully…"[5]

Here are some paragraphs from my letter that Batista's army seized and published:

Sierra Maestra
December 25, 1957
My very much admired Che,

I write this second note after receiving the one that you sent Daniel[6] and his response. I regret even more not having gone to see you days ago, but believe me, we've had to deal with a thousand things and my presence outside is becoming indispensable.

I am sure that a conversation between us would solve a thousand problems, even your proper and legitimate doctrinal concerns in relation to us.

But I must say to you that, in addition to being gross, you have been unjust. That you think that we are rightists or come out of the

native petit bourgeoisie or more accurately, that we represent that class, is logical and doesn't surprise me, because it is in keeping with your interpretation of the historical process of the Russian revolution. But in the end we've had no option but to undertake this small national revolution because the guides of the world proletariat transformed the powerful explosion of 1917 into a nationalist revolution that took up first of all—something very legitimate for the Russians—a liberation movement against tsarist feudalism. But they left the peoples situated outside that country without the opportunity of unleashing a universal revolution that perhaps will now take an unexpected route.

The worst thing about this is that Stalin wasn't French, English or German and therefore did not go beyond the limits of being a Russian ruler. Had he been born in Paris perhaps he would not have viewed the world so narrowly.

I repeat, none of this is our fault, but is due to the political incapacity to evaluate this broader situation on the part of the real geniuses of the October revolution.

What does make me a little angry is your lack of understanding in relation to our attitude to a pact[7] that we were always going to reject. As soon as I reach Santiago I will send you all the documents about this. I want to say, dear Che, that if there might be differences in the international aspect of revolutionary policy, I am to be found among the most radical in terms of the political outlook of our revolution.

We rejected the pact and insisted that they comply with our points. We did not make this public because at that time it would have created confusion among the people, but rather we waited to exhaust the possibility that they might accept our points to discuss with Fidel the need for a public rejection. And we felt great satisfaction when we saw that Fidel was publicly presenting positions identical to ours. We felt great satisfaction when in Miami one of the signatories to the Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra, Raúl Chibás,[8] said that what we were raising encompassed his points also. We felt great satisfaction in seeing that there was complete agreement between "the leftist leader of

> the petit bourgeoisie" and the petit bourgeoisie that you say we embody.
>
> I do want to tell you that I feel very happy with being considered petit bourgeois because my conscience is clear and I know that such jibes can't affect me… [Furthermore] I have focused on organizing workers and know that they will become the determining force in our revolution. If we have followed the wrong road, I beg you to point out the right one. […]
>
> With respect,
>
> *Jacinto*[9]

As I have explained, many of us were still becoming who we are today and were not exempt from having prejudices against socialism. What is tragic is that these prejudices were confirmed by events that were officially denounced in the critical reports prepared for the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956. Those criticisms, however, never went to the root of the matter, and that year also saw the well-known events of the tanks rolling into Hungary.

I will never forget that Fidel told me in the Sierra Maestra not to send the letter to Commander Guevara in order to promote unity of our forces. But since the army published it, and Che refers to these issues in his diary, I have presented the original text [of the letter] to show that, despite these difficulties, we never abandoned our admiration for the Argentine who had joined Fidel in Mexico, landed in Cuba as part of the *Granma* expedition, and who became one of the most beloved heroes in Cuban history.

Today I can assure those who read this diary that those compañeros whom Che mentions and whom he assumed were not communists at that time—and, in part, he had some justification for his comments—have remained with the socialist revolution and with Fidel. Some died in combat and would have shared these lines with me.[10]

Among them is René Ramos Latour (Daniel), one of the most principled and loyal leaders of the *llano*. That is why one is so moved by the description Che gives, in relation to his death in combat, when he writes: "René Ramos [Daniel] and I were political enemies with profound ideological differences separating us, but he knew how to die fulfilling his duty on the front line. And when one dies in that way it's because one feels an inner conviction, something that I had denied him; so at this moment I stand corrected."[11]

That inner drive is what made Daniel and Che great men. History unites such individuals above and beyond the political differences of the moment.

In Cuba, among those of us who were involved at the center of those discussions, we embraced socialist ideas and love Che as one of the great glories of humanity in the 20th century. This analysis is necessary to point out the true dimension of the uniqueness of the work done by Fidel, and the fact that differences of opinion between principled revolutionaries, those of the *sierra* and those of the *llano*, did not affect the indestructible unity of the first socialist revolution of the Americas. It is an example we hope others might learn from.

There was something else that greatly accelerated the radicalization of the "generation of the centennial": imperialism. From 1931 to December 1958 Batista was the strong man in Cuba, protected despite the terrible crimes committed on Cuba's streets and in Cuban jails and fields in the 1950s. He was the guarantee that the interests of the North Americans would be defended, and they supported Batista's March 10, 1952, coup with everything they had, even as he acted criminally and illegally against our people.

Che did not know our country Cuba directly at that time, and obviously did not instantly have the sense of its history he acquired months later. He was only beginning to discover Cuba; and we were beginning to discover socialism, which we arrived at through our cultural heritage and the sense of justice we inherited from our parents and grandparents.

With the publication of Che's *Diary*, where these references appear to the ideological debates of those years, I feel it is my duty, with the serenity that the years bring, and in homage to the Cuban guerrillas, to say that these were not the only differences that existed between the combatants in the *sierra* and the *llano*.

Such differences must be analyzed in the context of a movement of practical changes and adjustments, which is reflected in the vision of revolutionaries who are looking for the correct road in the fight against the enemy. In the Sierra Maestra, the vision of the guerrillas was developing in such a way that it led to victory. In the cities, the cadres and combatants were developing an outlook that led to the outcome of the April 9, 1958, strike.

Independently of the emphasis that each of these perspectives gave to the action through which victory would be achieved, for all of us it was

clear that the foundations of the revolution were the mass armed insurrection, the revolutionary general strike, the July 26 Movement program and Fidel's undisputed leadership.

The peoples of our America, in the face of the political impossibility of achieving their immediate objective, have developed a historical consciousness of the importance of the example of fighting, and dying if necessary, in defense of an ideal. We—and Che demonstrates this sublimely—know the historic value that the example of sacrifice in the struggle for higher political and social aspirations can have.

Ernesto Che Guevara received and enriched that spiritual legacy, and he decided to forge his character to adopt, in his deeds and by dedicating his life, an unflagging commitment to defending with his great talent, valor and virtue, the rights of the poor of the Americas and Martí and Bolívar's aspiration to the moral integration of the Latin American homelands.

In the spiritual background of the psyche of this Argentine-Cuban-Latin American patriot existed, in one form or another and to varying degrees, the same ethical and cultural roots of Martí's thought. And those roots—which as a child and adolescent Che could not have learned in the form Martí gave them—led him toward a humanism of the poor. He worked as a doctor in the sad leper colonies of our America and came into contact with those who live in misery in various corners of our hemisphere.

These Latin American and universal values, expressed in a culture of serving the interests of the poor, is what united Che and Fidel. If it had been simple rebelliousness this alliance might have been transitory. But it was through this cultured, educated rebellious spirit that the union between the two men became solid.

The bonds between Che and Martí's homeland also became unbreakable due to the wealth of moral and spiritual values emanating from our America, which were also present in Guevara. Fidel and Che are united by the same culture, and that root ties the passion for justice and human liberty to a profound knowledge that is in those who have within them a deeply noble spirit.

From those far-off days in 1955, when Antonio Ñico López first told me about an Argentine doctor he had met in Guatemala, and whom he wanted to introduce to Fidel, I have loved and admired Che, and not for one second, even in the midst of those heated debates, did I stop feeling that way toward him. The history of other revolutions has been different, in so far as

problems similar to our debates gave rise to conflicts that had fatal consequences. We Cubans have had the glory of having a revolution led by Fidel who had assimilated a democratic tradition in the manner of Martí: profound, radical and based on universal values.

Dr. Armando Hart Dávalos

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1. The *sierra* (the mountains) and the *llano* (the plain) refer to the two wings of the revolutionary movement in Cuba: the guerrilla movement in the mountains and the underground struggle in the cities.
2. Armando Hart was a young lawyer and a founding member of the July 26 Movement in Oriente province. He was an active participant in the underground struggle until he was captured in August 1958 and imprisoned on the infamous Isle of Pines. Released after the revolution in January 1959, he became the minister of education and played a key role in the extraordinarily successful 1961 literacy campaign. He was the target of some sharp criticism by Che in this diary, but after the revolution, the two developed a very close intellectual identification, as is evident in Che's letter to Armando Hart published in Ernesto Che Guevara: *Self-Portrait: A Photographic and Literary Memoir* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press, 2004).
3. Armando Hart Dávalos, *Aldabonazo* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas), 1997.
4. The year 1956 in which the Cubans initiated their struggle against the Batista dictatorship was also the year in which the monolithic socialist movement was rocked by Khrushchev's revelations about Stalin at the 20th congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Here Armando Hart is referring to how these international debates in the communist movement impacted on the emerging Cuban revolution.
5. Armando Hart Dávalos, *Aldabonazo*, pp. 151-53.
6. René Ramos Latour.
7. The Miami Pact.
8. Brother of Eduardo Chibás, the founder of the Orthodox Party.
9. "Jacinto" was Armando Hart's *nom de guerre*.
10. The exception was Carlos Franqui, who in those days presented himself as a Marxist.
11. See Che's diary entry for July 30, 1958.

1956

Che used roman numerals to indicate the consecutive order of the notebooks that make up his *Diary of a Combatant*. All footnotes are by the editors unless otherwise indicated.

The diary starts on December 2, 1956, the date the *Granma* landed at Las Coloradas beach, in what was then Oriente province. The story of the arrival of the rebels in Cuba and the days that followed is recounted by Che in the first chapter of his *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*.

Notebook I

December 2

Roque[1] fell into the water.

We came ashore in a mangrove swamp and lost all the heavy equipment. Eight men led by Juan Manuel Marcos got lost. We walked a little through the forest without a guide.

3

We walked slowly; reconnaissance flights follow each other continuously. We ate only one meal. That night Luis Crespo lost his way.

4

We started the march slowly. Luis Crespo comes back with the news that he found the lost group by himself. We wait for them and continue slowly toward Agua Fría [Agua Fina][2] where we ate. At night we set out and walked until 12:30. We stopped in a cane field for three hours. We ate a lot of sugar cane; we left traces, and walked until dawn.

5

We made camp in a wood at the edge of a cane field in a depression surrounded by hills. At 4:30 the enemy forces carried out a surprise attack. The general staff withdrew to the cane field and ordered a retreat in that direction. The withdrawal became a flight. The general staff abandoned a lot of equipment. I tried to save a box of bullets, and right then Arbentosa [Albentosa] was wounded in a burst of fire, I believe mortally, and I was also wounded slightly in the neck. The bullet struck the box first, threw me to the ground, and I lost consciousness for a couple of minutes. Pepe Ponce had a lung wound and Raúl Suárez was wounded in the hand. When we withdrew commander Pino stayed behind, shouting surrender, and Fuentes also remained with the most gravely wounded.

Almeida, Ramiro Valdés, Benítez, Chao and I formed a group and left the cane field. We went into the forest and walked, listening to the sound of

burning cane fields. We had to stop as we had no idea where we were going.

6

At dawn we resumed the march, coming to a large cave.[3] We decided to spend the day there. We had one can of milk and approximately one liter of water. We heard the sounds of combat nearby. Planes were strafing. We left at night, guiding ourselves by the moon and the North Star until we lost sight of them, and then we slept.

7

We went into the forest heading east. We drank water from depressions in coral reefs. Benítez had accidentally spilled the milk the previous day. We did not eat anything.

8

We continued heading east, and at midday we saw the sea below some very high cliffs that had dense vegetation. It was night when we called a halt without having been able to reach the bottom.

9

We reached the seashore at midday after going through a very dense bramble thicket. It was impossible to go on by daylight due to the planes. We waited underneath some trees with a liter of water until dark. At nightfall we continued walking, coming upon prickly pear with fruit and we ate all that was there. We continued to advance and in a hut found three more compañeros who joined us: Pancho González, Cienfuegos and Hurtado.

10

When dawn came we went into the forest looking for water, but found very little. Those who had eaten crabs suffered a great deal from thirst.

Once again we continued by night until we reached a bay that later we would learn was called Boca del Toro.[4] We heard roosters crowing and waited for dawn.

11

Near us was a *bohío* [hut],[5] and we deliberated on what we should do. Pancho González and I did not want to go there, Benítez and Cienfuegos did. It was decided to go in, but as Benítez was about to enter he saw a sailor and we pulled back, going around the hut to remain in a cave in the cliff. From there we watched what happened during the entire day, including the landing of troops: 17 men, from a small boat. We came upon a

corn field and ate young ears until we had somewhat placated our hunger. At dawn we came upon a stream where we drank as much water as we wanted, filled the canteens and then went up a small hill to wait out the day.

12

At night we walked toward the north. We were about to go into another hut, but ahead of the others, I heard a toast “to my comrades in arms,” and we took off with renewed vigor. We found the stream again and continued on our way until 12:00, when we stopped, with people quite exhausted.

13

The whole day without food and little water. At dusk we head north toward a town that we would later learn was Pilón. At 1:00 a.m., against my advice, we went to a hut.[6] They treated us very well and fed us; people got sick from eating so much. We spent the day indoors. Many Adventists[7] came to see us, and at nightfall four of us set off for the house of one of them: Almeida, Pancho González, Chao and I. Benítez and Ramiro went to another house. Cienfuegos went to still another one. Hurtado was to have gone with him, but he decided to stay because he wasn’t feeling well. We learned that there are 16 dead.[8] Eight of them at Boca del Toro, all murdered when they surrendered. The names are starting to come out: Chivás,[9] Royo, Hirzel. We know of five compañeros who turned themselves in and are alive: Hidalgo, César Gómez, Fuentes (who had wanted to surrender at the beginning), Montes de Oca and Armando Rodríguez. We know groups of compañeros have passed by, heading toward the mountains. The weapons all remain at the house of A.G. [Alfredo González], the man who first welcomed us; the rifles and bullets are there. We all have peasants’ clothing. Almeida and I have pistols. We went to A.R.’s old house where we filled up with food.

14

The day passes without any developments, but at nightfall we heard the unpleasant news, without any more details, that the weapons had been captured along with Hurtado. The four of us left, guided by G.G. [Guillermo García] to the house of another peasant, and on the road we learned of new dead: Pino,[10] Juan [José] Ramón, probably Enrique Cámara [Cueles]; of new arrests without deaths: Chaumont, Zelaya, Echevarría, Soto [Sotto]; and of people who are safe: Calixto García, Calixto Morales, Carlos Bermúdez, Morán, Guan [Huau], Arsenio García, Pablo the cook. There is no word about Fidel.

15

There were no developments during the day. We received a note from G.A.[11] saying that he had located Fausto[12] and that we were to stay put; there are indications that Alejandro[13] will be located.

16

Alejandro's presence is confirmed. The reunion will take place in the mountains. The day passes without major events.

Two new prisoners: Zelaya, the Mexican, and Amaya.[14] One more death is confirmed: Luis Arcos.

17

We head north guided by C.M.[15] who hands us over to P.C.[16] Ramiro and Cienfuegos are in bad shape due to diarrhea and stay behind; we continue to try to cross the highway but discover that soldiers are there and we have to spend the night in a cassava thicket. New, unconfirmed detentions: Roque, Márquez[17] and one death: F. [Félix] Elmuza.

18

When we were about to set out, G.G. arrives with an order to wait so that we can go back to recover two rifles. Chao goes with him. There is nothing else new.

19

After waiting all day as usual, we left with R.P.M. [Ricardo Pérez Montano] guiding the six of us. Chao does not meet us at the indicated place because the guide says he has other orders. After crossing the highway and walking almost all night, we made camp in a small wood that is part of a farm that belongs to D.M. [Delio Mesa] with the message to go early for breakfast. C.M. stays with us to go and talk with Alejandro, whom he hadn't yet met.

20

We get the disagreeable surprise that D.M. had not received any note and denied a relation with Crescencio.[18] C.M. who was the one with the message continued on to Purial to communicate to Mongo[19] the bad news. We remained in the woods until 5:00 p.m. when Almeida and Benítez went to get food, by force if necessary. It was not necessary, as the man had received the message and was prepared. Nevertheless, he did not want us anywhere nearby, so he quickly indicated where we should go. We lost our way several times but in the pre-dawn hours we found the house. We were

told that C.M. had been there but that he was not trustworthy. Fidel delivered a philippic for our having left the rifles.[20]

21

We spent the day waiting for the arrival of some weapons. We are 15: Fidel, Faustino and Universo, one group; Raúl, Armando Rodríguez, Almejeiras [Ameijeiras], René, Ciro, another group; Almeida, Benítez, Cienfuegos, Ramiro, Pancho González and I. Chao has not returned from his mission. At this time, the following have weapons: Fidel, Universo, Faustino, Raúl, Ciro, Ameijeiras, and René have rifles with telescopic sights; Armando has a machine gun and Almeida a submachine gun. Chao has my pistol. New arrests: Montané, Gilberto. Two new deaths: Eduardo Reyes and Leyva[21] in an ambush. Márquez's death has almost been confirmed. I have an asthma attack and have a bad night. We are at the house of Mongo Pérez.

22

A day of almost complete inactivity. The weapons arrive. Everyone has weapons. There are two Johnsons, two Thompsons and rifles. Crescencio Pérez has my pistol and I have a poor rifle. The asthma attack subsides.

Two new surrenders are confirmed: Cabrera and Godoy,[22] and one death: Noelio Capote.

23

We remain in the same place. There is a combat simulation, I come running to bring the news. The men showed a good fighting spirit. People arrived from Manzanillo, bringing 300 .45-caliber bullets for the Thompsons and nine dynamite cartridges. We are almost completely equipped; we slept in the same place. The people from Manzanillo are a young woman called Eugenia[23] and her husband. Faustino departed for Havana[24] via Santiago, and he gave me his new rifle with a telescopic sight, a jewel. They brought sufficient medicines for small ailments, but there are no instruments.

24

We spent Christmas Eve at the same place, in a wait that I think may be futile. Another Johnson rifle has been found but it has not yet arrived at its destination. A newspaper published the news that an Argentine communist with a terrible record, who had been expelled from his country, came on the expedition. His last name, of course, is Guevara.

25

Finally, after a sumptuous pork banquet we set out for Los Negros. The march began slowly and we cut through barbed wire, thereby leaving a

calling card. We carried out a mock seizure of a house for practice and while we were at it the owner Hermel [Hermes Cardero] showed up. In between the conversation and the coffee we lost two hours.

Finally we decided to take the main road and we made more progress but the noise we made makes us obvious to any hut along the road and there were many. At dawn we reached our destination.

26

We spent the day next to a stream sleeping and resting; at night we went to an uninhabited ranch to sleep, and a commission arrived with someone called Ramón to bring us news. It was agreed to bring Calixto García and Carlos Bermúdez the following day so that they could join the guerrilla group and wait for the people from Manzanillo. It doesn't seem right to me but Fidel insists on this. The guerrilla group has been constituted as follows: general staff: Fidel, Universo, Crescencio, his son Sergiro[25] and I. Raúl's platoon with Ramiro, Ciro, René, Calixto and Chao, and Almeida's platoon with Ameijeiras, Benítez, Cienfuegos, Pancho González and Armando. The vanguard is a squadron composed of Armando with a machine gun and Ramiro and Calixto with Johnson rifles.

27

This day went by without any developments, save the roasting of a cow in the Argentine style that came out well but took a long time. During the night Calixto García and Carlos Bermúdez arrived, the latter with a leg in bad shape. He will be sent to Havana because he can't engage in combat in that condition. In the pre-dawn hours Julio Díaz, Luis Crespo, and e*l Gallego* Morán[26] arrived, accompanied by three peasants who came to join the group. Their names are: Guillermo García, with the rank of lieutenant, Manuel Fajardo,[27] Sergio Acuña, Ramón Torres and his brothers Juan and Ángel Marrero. Crescencio is in charge of all the peasants who have joined.

28

Nothing new today, only the arrival of *Bohemia* that has names of more people who have been presented […].[28] In the afternoon, at the camp, one of the new people who had come, Manuel Fajardo, accidentally fired a shot while he was on guard duty. When we heard the shot, everyone loaded their weapons, and at that moment, Calixto García also fired his weapon unintentionally. But this didn't go beyond giving everyone a fright.

29

Nothing new during the day, but at night the young woman from Manzanillo came back bringing four machine-gun clips, six hand grenades, 20 detonators, nine dynamite cartridges and the books that I had asked for: algebra, basic Cuban history and geography. That night a rainstorm soaked everyone. Almost no one slept, and we spent the night trying to build fires and roasting plantains.

30

We continued the march at midday through a patch of scrub surrounded by fog. We rested until nightfall and then we continued, reaching the hut of the Marrero family,[29] whose three sons joined the revolution, where we ate. Then we went to a patch of scrub where we spent the night.

31

The last day of the year was spent instructing the new recruits, doing some reading and carrying out the small tasks of war. At night we slept in a hut where we celebrated New Year's Eve sleeping in the shadows. Late that night Ramón Torres [Marrero] brought the news that a battalion had been mobilized and was heading toward the Sierra Maestra and that it would come via Estrada Palma, which is a place that we would have to go near. A lot of equipment came. There is talk of buying hammocks for each individual.

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1. Roberto Roque Núñez was the helmsman of the cabin cruiser *Granma* that brought the rebels to Cuba from Mexico.
2. The names of places and persons that Che wrote incorrectly have been corrected [in brackets] the first time they appear, and then have been corrected in all further instances.
3. The story of the aftermath of the dispersal of the rebels at Alegría del Pío is narrated in the chapter "Adrift," in Che's *Reminiscences…*
4. The reference is to the mouth of the Toro River.
5. The *bohío* (hut) belonged to Manuel Fernández, a peasant known as *Manolo Capitán*, who had turned over nine members of the *Granma* expedition to Batista's army, eight of whom were murdered.
6. The home of the peasant Alfredo González was located on the crest of Regino Hill. He was a member of a group of Adventists in that area whose pastor, Argelio Rosabal, was committed to helping the rebels.
7. This religious group was headed by Argelio Rosabal, who is sometimes referred to in Che's diary as "A.R."

8. These were moments of uncertainty and inaccurate news about the members of the expedition who had been murdered or imprisoned. Later Che corrected some of these facts in his diary and others were explained in his *Reminiscences…*
9. One of those murdered that day was Andés Luján Vázquez. Apparently this was confusion on Che's part, since in the list of those who took part in the *Granma* expedition, there is no one with the last name of Chivás.
10. Onelio Pino Izquierdo and Pedro Sotto Alba managed to escape.
11. He should have written "G.G." because the note was from Guillermo García.
12. *Fausto* was Faustino Pérez's *nom de guerre*.
13. *Alejandro* was Fidel Castro's *nom de guerre*.
14. Fernando Sánchez-Amaya Padral managed to escape.
15. Carlos López Mas (*Carlitos Mas*).
16. The peasant Pedro Carrillo (*Perucho*).
17. In the dispersal of the rebels at Alegría de Pío, Juan Manuel Márquez wound up alone and he was captured in Estacadero on December 15 and murdered near San Román.
18. Crescencio Pérez was a peasant and member of the so-called reception network that had been organized in the zone by Celia Sánchez, and to which Guillermo García and the Tejeda brothers, among others, also belonged.
19. Ramón Pérez (*Mongo*) was a peasant and Crescencio Pérez's brother.
20. The meeting place was at Cinco Palmas, where Fidel, Raúl and other expeditionaries had been since December 17. The story of the reunion of the rebel forces is described in the chapter "Adrift" in Che's *Reminiscences*…
21. This information was incorrect because in the list of future expeditionaries there is only Enio Leyva Fuentes, who was arrested in Mexico together with other compañeros days before the *Granma* sailed as the result of a snitch. He later joined the struggle in the Sierra Maestra.
22. In fact, Israel Cabrera had died on December 5 in the combat at Alegría de Pío, and Norberto Godoy Rojas was captured later.
23. The young woman was Eugenia Verdecia (*Geña*). Enrique Escalona and Rafael Sierra came with her, neither of them being her husband.
24. Fidel sent Faustino Pérez to restructure the movement's networks in Havana and to look for a reputable journalist who could report the presence of the guerrilla force in the Sierra Maestra.

25. This person is referred to as either Sergio or *Sergiro*, the latter being his nickname.
26. Translator's note: Che uses the term "*Gallego*" to refer to any Spaniard, not just someone from Galicia, Spain. José Lorenzo Morán Lesille (*el Gallego* Morán) was executed as a traitor in Guantánamo in 1957.
27. Manuel Fajardo Sotomayor, from Niquero, should not be confused with Manuel (*Piti*) Fajardo Rivero, the medical doctor from Manzanillo, who later would join Column One.
28. The editors have chosen to delete some of Che's diary. Where this has occurred, this is indicated by square brackets. In the editing, details of some evaluative circumstantial judgments have been omitted, and each time this is considered necessary, the omission will be indicated by ellipsis between brackets.
29. The home of the peasant Juan Marrero and his family, including his sons Anguelo and Ramón.

1957

January 1957

1

We spent the day in patch of scrub. At night we went to camp at the hut of a friend who has been bringing us food. But we were already soaked due to persistent rain. While there we heard that 400 men were advancing from Estrada Palma to cut off our route to La Plata, and garrisons in the zone were being considerably reinforced. There were also reports that they were looking for Mongo; his house had been searched. Eleven men from Manzanillo are headed in this direction and there is another group in a place called La Gloria guided by Mongo Torres. We decided not to wait for them.

2

It was raining at dawn, we decided to wait in the hut for it to stop. As the hours passed, local peasants came by to offer their services. We accepted one of them,[1] who was known to Crescencio, as a guide. Two of the Montanos were unwilling to join the detachment without weapons. In the evening we set out on a slow and very tiring march along muddy paths and with the men suffering from diarrhea. After a 10-hour march that was punctuated by repeated halts for the reasons already mentioned, we made camp on the banks of a river, crossing which we got wet up to our knees.

3

We spent the day drying our clothes and sleeping. At dusk we ate and set out in the direction of La Plata, walking two leagues[2] at our usual slow pace. The night's walk ended at 1:00 in the morning, and we slept in the hut of our guide's brother. We receive the welcome news that Nené Jerez was badly wounded and close to death. He was the person who had led the soldiers to the place where we were at Alegría [de Pío].

4

The day went by without any movement. We heard that there had been a clash at Chivirico, that Fidel had been killed in a battle, and that the troops were pulling out from the Sierra Maestra.

5

Lacking news about the groups following us, we move in daylight through wooded areas to the house of Eligio Mendoza. From the hills we see Caracas Peak, covered in forest, where it will be easy to resist. Eligio is very afraid and tried to avoid having us around, but we decide to spend the night in the hut of his daughter,[3] deep in the forest. The outlook is good

because from there to La Plata is rocky and wooded terrain, ideal for defense. The name of the river is Ají.

6

Raúl [Barroso], the brother-in-law of Lebrija [Lebrigio], came with the news that there were 10 men without weapons at the farm of his father-in-law in Manzanillo. Acuña and René went to get them, and at night they took nine unarmed people from Manzanillo in a jeep to Mongo Pérez's farm, and from there through the countryside to meet up with us. The news they brought was old and not much use. The Manzanillos' names are: Francisco Echevarría, Daniel Emilio Motolá, Salvador Rosales, Antolín Quiroga, cell leaders, Gerardo Torres [*Yayo* Reyes], Julio Acosta, Heriberto [Hermilio] Rey, Luis Salinas, Rudy Pesán [Pesant] (this last one is also a cell leader). The procedure followed to select the men was to take the best five from each cell and then the best two from every five.

7

We began the march early through patches of scrub. We spent the whole day getting to the side of Caracas Peak near El Mulato, which was our destination. There we waited for nightfall and the arrival of the owner[4] of the hut where we were to stay overnight. At the hut they had butchered a pig and we ate for the first time that day. We spent the night under the roof of a structure without walls. We decided to wait for developments here.

8

A day without events, passed at the same place where we had camped. We sent emissaries to search for Julio Guerrero on the coast, or nearby.

9

Guerrero arrived, brought by Eligio, owner of the farm where we are staying. The reports are contradictory, but it appears there are no soldiers in this zone. Something unexpected occurs in the afternoon: news of our presence has spread among various neighbors and reached the ears of a snitch, who set out for the coast to tell the troops. We decide to continue on to another nearby hut to be more protected. We have to remain in the area because Echevarría has gone to Manzanillo to transmit orders and bring back weapons.

In the evening we went to eat at Eligio's hut, and Ramón Marrero, one of the most useful men that we have in this zone, joins us there. He brings a radio from Manzanillo and some bad news: Guillermo García was unable to find our people and he is coming back with Ignacio, another of Crescencio's

sons, and a new recruit. He was only able to find three weapons. Some people are refusing to turn over their weapons—or rather, the weapons they wound up with. It looks like the weapons that are coming are a Johnson, a semi-automatic Remington and another rifle. We walked a small distance at night, but through such rough terrain that the short walk seemed like leagues. Ramiro hit his wounded leg, and with such terrible luck that he probably suffered a fracture and it is virtually impossible for him to walk. The rest went on to a nearby farm,[5] while we remained at a hut where I bandaged Ramiro's leg temporarily until I can put it into a more or less effective splint.

10

Immobility and bad food. In the morning, taking Ramiro to the camp was an odyssey. He has a possible fracture and will have to remain here when we leave. In the afternoon, a beautiful sight: 18 marines on the road, carefree and looking for Fidel. They would have been an easy target but it was not possible to attack them because we haven't received the provisions and we're still waiting for Guillermo García. Fidel's plan is to carry out an ambush and withdraw into the forest with food for several days. It doesn't seem like a bad idea but it's a lot of weight. My plan was to establish a camp with lots of food, sending out patrols to attack, but having a central camp. In addition to the temporary loss of Ramiro we have also lost two men permanently. One of them, Rosales, told me he has tuberculosis. There is something suspicious in his attitude but Fidel decided to discharge him without further ado. A couple of guys are undecided. The snitches have been active; as soon as our presence in the zone is known the Rural Guards arrive. We need to carry out an exemplary punishment. Fidel sent Enrique [Enrique Suavo], one of the new recruits, to get food so that we can be in a position to attack at any time. We spent the night on a ridge overlooking the house.

11

We spent the day at the same place waiting, as neither the food nor Guillermo arrived. Given an opportunity to do so, five of the men from Manzanillo decided to return, pointing to the lack of weapons and saying they could do more there. Four left during the day, one remained because he was sick. Ramiro's leg is still bad and we will leave him here. No other developments. The Rural Guards did not make an appearance.

12

We had originally decided to leave during the night. At Crescencio's urging, we decided to wait for cans of milk that were slow in coming, so we waited until the next day. There was a meeting with a rural leader,[6] something of a charlatan and an opportunist, but who put himself at our disposal. The plan that we communicated to him is that we would kill the three overseers[7] who had terrorized the peasants.

13

During the morning we received various visitors, a rural leader who said he had 20 men, and a couple of merchants who offered their services in relation to supplies and messages. We placed an order for food and medicine. People from the region came to greet us and offer their help. At 3:00, after a good lunch, we set off for La Plata, we walked until 5:00, stopping so we would cross an open area at 6:00, when night would already be falling. We continued to walk under moonlight until approximately 9:30, sleeping in a small clearing. Melquiades Elías, a friend of our guide Eutimio,[8] has marked the route with a machete.

14

At 6:00 in the morning we continued the march along a hillside, starting to descend toward the Magdalena River, where we arrived two hours later and ate breakfast. Fidel calibrated all the rifles with telescopic sights. There are 23 functional weapons, nine rifles with telescopic sights, five automatic rifles, four common rifles, two Thompsons, two submachine guns, and one 16-gauge shotgun. In the afternoon we climbed the last of the hills before reaching La Plata, and there we ran into two cousins of Eutimio, the guide. We took one of them prisoner for two or three days, the other went free.[9] We found a road built to bring out harvested trees from the woods and followed it until dark without seeing La Plata.

15

We proceeded slowly, looking for the barracks through the telescopic sights, and as we had little water and all the food with us was canned, we went to a stream to get water. We ate a can (92 grams [3.24 ounces]) of sardines each for breakfast, and for lunch a piece of cheese, a sausage, half a can of *dulce de leche* and half a can of condensed milk. That was it for the day. We continued to advance with great caution, already having spotted the mouth of La Plata River and its half-built barracks. We could see a group of men partly dressed in uniforms doing domestic tasks. At 6:00 in the afternoon a patrol boat full of Rural Guards arrived, and they initiated a series of

maneuvers, the meaning of which we did not understand. We decided to postpone the attack until the next day.

16

From dawn we had people watching the garrison (the coast guard boat had already left) and we began our patrols.[10] We were disconcerted by not seeing soldiers anywhere. At 3:00 in the afternoon we decided to get closer to the road to be able to observe what was happening. We crossed La Plata River and took positions on the road at dusk. Five minutes later, we captured two prisoners[11] and two kids who were with them. One turned out to be the man accused of having snitched on Eutimio. We squeezed them a little and found out that there were 10 soldiers in the barracks and that they had arrived from Naranjo that very afternoon. In addition, one of the three overseers, Chicho Osorio, considered the worst of the three, was supposed to come by soon. And sure enough, he came along, riding on a mule, followed by a black kid on foot, the 14-year-old son of the administrator of the Arteaga store in El Macío. The man, surprised by the shout of "Halt on orders from the Rural Guard," called out "mosquito," the password of the government troops, and then, "I am Chicho Osorio." We disarmed them, taking his .45 caliber revolver and the knife the black kid was carrying.

We brought him to Fidel, who pretended to be a colonel in the Rural Guard who was investigating supposed irregularities. Chicho Osorio, who was drunk, then gave us a list of all the enemies of the regime who "had to have their balls cut off," as he put it. There we had confirmation of who were our friends and who were not. Asked about Eutimio and Osorio, he said Eutimio had hidden Fidel and that they were looking for him to kill him but they hadn't found him. When Fidel told him that Fidel had to be killed wherever he was, Osorio went over the top with enthusiasm, saying Crescencio, too.

After giving more absurd demonstrations of submission and malice, this man offered to guide us in an attack on the barracks so that we could see how insecure the defenses were. After crossing the river, we told him military norms required that prisoners be tied up. The man was so drunk or naïve that he still failed to realize who we were. He explained that the only guard post was between a barracks under construction and the house of another overseer, Honorio. He guided us to an Anacahuite tree near the barracks where the road to El Macío passed. Luis Crespo went on reconnaissance, and returned confirming that the overseer's report was

accurate and he could see the Guards' cigar smoke and hear voices at the place Chicho had indicated. We had to throw ourselves on the ground to avoid being spotted by three Rural Guards on horseback who went by dragging a prisoner on foot like a mule, showering him with insults and threats. We allowed them to pass as detaining them so near the barracks might sound the alarm.

Everything was arranged for an attack with 22 weapons. Chicho remained at the clump of trees, guarded by two men who had orders to execute him as soon as the shoot-out started, an order they fulfilled. Julio Díaz, with Cienfuegos, Benítez and Calixto, with automatic rifles, would attack the thatched house on the extreme right; Fidel, Universo, Luis Crespo, Calixto García, Fajardo and I would attack the center; and Raúl with his platoon, as well as Almeida and his platoon, would attack the barracks on the left. We crawled until we were 40 meters away from the enemy position and then Fidel opened fire with two bursts of automatic weapons fire, followed by fire from all the available rifles. We called on the soldiers to surrender but received no response. The attack began at 2:40 in the morning, and after a few minutes came the order to throw grenades. Luis Crespo threw his, and I mine, but neither one exploded. Raúl Castro threw dynamite. The order was given to burn down the thatched house. Universo tried first, but beat a hasty retreat when shots landed close to him, then Cienfuegos tried, also with a negative result; then Luis Crespo and I succeeded in setting it ablaze. It turned out to be a shack full of coconuts. Luis Crespo skirted around a horse pen or pig sty and wounded in the chest a soldier coming toward him. I took the soldier's rifle from him and used him to hide behind while shooting at a man I think I wounded. Luis Crespo took the wounded man's cartridge belt and moved to another position.

From behind a tree Cienfuegos fired at a fleeing sergeant but failed to hit him. The shooting had stopped on both fronts and the people inside the zinc-roofed house surrendered. Cienfuegos entered the yard of the thatched house and only found wounded men. The result of the battle was eight Springfield rifles, a machine gun and 1,000 rounds of ammunition. We had fired about 500 rounds. In addition we obtained cartridge belts, helmets, sausages, knives and even some rum. They had two dead and five wounded, three of them gravely wounded, and we had three prisoners. I set fire to Honorio's house and everything around it, and someone else set fire to the barracks, which went up in an impressive spectacle as it was full of holes.

The order was given to withdraw to our camp with the three military prisoners, who were freed and given some medicine for their wounded. We also released the five civilians we had detained, after giving a suspected snitch a severe warning. At 4:30 that morning we set out toward Palma Mocha, arriving at dawn.

17

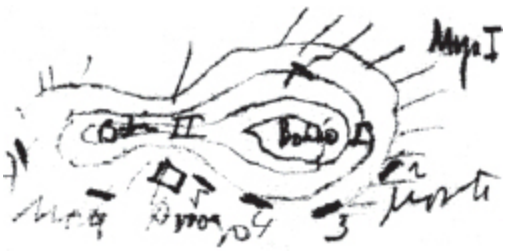
We walked at a good pace up the Palma Mocha River where we came across a ghastly sight. All the families in that zone were fleeing toward the coast due to the threats made by a corporal and an overseer, Miro,[12] regarding a supposed bombardment by the air force against the rebels. The maneuver was clear: to drive out the peasants and then the company could take over the abandoned land. Unfortunately, this lie coincided with our attack so the peasants responded to our exhortations with timid evasions and the majority eventually abandoned their homes.

We walked all morning to a hut that was also a store, where they served us a sumptuous pork banquet. We spent an entire day resting by the bank of a river with crystalline water and slept on a ridge, waiting for the soldiers to come, but they never did.

18

At dawn Crescencio brought the news that soldiers were nearby. It was decided that we would leave immediately, but first Fidel wanted to carry out the distribution of bullets, stipulated to be 40 per rifle. When asked, Acuña, who had 100 rounds, refused to hand over his extra ammunition. Fidel ordered his arrest and, in response, Acuña cocked his rifle, ready to shoot. Raúl intervened and later, with Crescencio's assistance, convinced Acuña to hand over the cartridge belt and rifle and to request permission to remain in our army. Fidel accepted this, creating a bad precedent because Acuña acted as if he had won out.

We walked to Delfin's hut,[13] one of the last settlers in the area, where we ate and slept, taking advantage of the fact that he, too, was leaving for the coast. We decided to make this our definitive position for a few days. The position is this one:



The square is the kitchen; the black points indicate the position of our forces, from the top down and from left to right:

1. Morán and Ameijeiras with telescopic sights;
2. Julito Díaz, with Benítez, Cienfuegos and Calixto Morales;
3. Motolá with Rey, Julio Acosta and Felito [Felicito Jordán], who has a Springfield that is bigger than he is;
4. Guillermo García with Eduardo, Pancho and Ignacio, the son of Crescencio;
5. Almeida with Chao, René, the Acuñas, Sergio;
6. Raúl with Ciro and Armando;
7. Fidel with Universo, Crescencio, Luis, Calixto, Fajardo and I.

19

In the morning we went with a group led by Fidel to review the positions and they received us with a shot, thinking that we were the enemy and then took off running. Benítez scratched his face on some vines. It was decided to replace him with René in the forward squadron. We've acquired a youngster who lives one kilometer below us to get some things for us and to let us know if the army is coming.

20

In the morning we went with Crescencio on reconnaissance and we brought back some coffee and a corn grinder. The day transpired with nothing new except that our informant reported that all the small groups of soldiers in the direction of El Macho had withdrawn, and only 10 remain in Las Cuevas. The communiqués from the general staff say there was a battle in La Plata in which the army suffered two dead and five wounded, and eight dead on our side. We don't know if this is a general staff fantasy or represents eight peasants who were the victims of reprisals. Eutimio left to make his payments, and with that our group numbers 30 men, since Enrique, his buddy, and the prisoner, who was our guide, had already become separated from us on the day of the battle, each one taking a weapon that wasn't his to take, specifically a shotgun and the .45 caliber revolver that belonged to Chicho Osorio. The asthma has begun again, bothering me at night.

21

A day with no major developments. Luis Crespo and Calixto García returned from a reconnaissance mission to a nearby abandoned hut. We heard explosions far away and don't know what they were.[14] The radio gives no signs of life of Batista's forces, we anxiously wait for the news Eutimio may bring from his trip to Mulato. The trenches and communications are improving and now have an acceptable level of efficiency.

22

We heard isolated shots from the direction of the Palma Mocha River.[15] We put ourselves on alert; the sun rose without new developments. We had neither breakfast nor lunch. At exactly 12 noon I was at my post with Calixto García when he saw someone in the house, but could not see clearly who it was. We looked through a telescopic sight and saw it was a soldier. Calixto went to report but *el Flaco*[16] had already done so and we took our positions. There appeared to be six, and three remained in the farm higher up. Fidel opened fire and the man fell immediately, crying out "*Ay mi madre*." His two companions dropped immediately. Suddenly I realized that a soldier was hiding in the second house, some 20 meters from my position (see map above). I could only see his feet so I fired, hitting him with the second shot.

Luis brought a grenade that Fidel had sent because he had been told there were more men in the house. Luis covered me and I went in, but fortunately there was no one else inside. I retrieved the man's weapon and cartridge belt and examined him. He had been shot below the heart with an exit wound on the right and was dead.

We withdrew to the general staff's position because Julito, who had borne the brunt of the fighting with his squadron, reported that they were trying to surround our positions. I asked for permission to go with Luis to retrieve the three Garand rifles in the first hut, but Fidel was against it. We completed the withdrawal of everyone except the group in the first position that had to withdraw along the stream below. We all crossed a stream to head uphill in the direction of La Plata River.

After walking for a while we were joined by the group of four individuals already mentioned. We kept going through this difficult terrain, crossing the top of the hill and sleeping on the other side, as we could go no further. In all, four were confirmed dead: the three in the hut and mine,

another whom Morán or Ameijeiras had wounded, and three others possibly wounded by Julito. We had used about 200 bullets, the dynamite was left behind (René left it next to his backpack) and three backpacks were lost during the withdrawal. A dubious victory, but the fact that we caused several enemy casualties without any on our side was, in itself, a victory. Our morale is improving.

23

At first light we continued to look for the way to El Mulato but we couldn't find it, so we had to go to a hut next to a river. The owner didn't have *malanga* [a root vegetable] but took us to another hut,[17] where a meal was prepared, but it wasn't ready until it was dark. The owner of the first hut[18] turned out to be the son of one of those killed by Chicho Osorio, and he was delighted to hear the news of his death, although rumors had already been circulating throughout the area. The meal was frugal and we slept near the hut with our stomachs only a quarter or half full.

24

We left the hut before dawn to go down again to La Plata River. Walking slowly, we entered an area from which the peasants had been evicted. We took over a hut and made our meal with a pig that had been abandoned when the peasants fled. At nightfall, Crescencio, who had gone on reconnaissance with Almeida, Eduardo and Julio Acosta, brought three prisoners, members of the Rural Guard dressed in civilian clothes, who swore by the health of all their relatives that they had done nothing. Their statements did confirm each other's, but it looked like this had been arranged beforehand. The only useful thing we found out was that Major Casillas, allegedly the murderer of Jesús Menéndez,[19] or his brother, was in the Palma Mocha area, where he had been sent with reinforcements. Against the wishes of the more hardline among us, including myself, the prisoners were questioned, detained for one night and released. One of them took a letter to be delivered to Captain Morales,[20] head of the Bayamo garrison where he was stationed.

25

We set off at 4:30 a.m. leaving the prisoners inside a room made of royal palm fronds and we started to climb to reach the Magdalena and then Caracas and El Mulato; climbing to the top of a hill we remembered that this day marked two months since our departure from Mexico, and we celebrated by listening to the radio where, by coincidence, they were

playing a *ranchera*.[21] We continued climbing the hills all day, having a frugal meal with the last can we had, and we slept on a ridge that was windy and inhospitable. We drew up a balance sheet of the day. The last skirmish hadn't gone so well, but in taking the prisoners, we obtained a Star 38 revolver with three full clips of ammunition, a .45 caliber revolver and a .38. This meant at least two useful weapons for the men.

26

We continued more or less in the right direction but very hungry. At around 12:00 we came to a house with some mulatto youngsters, who treated us well and prepared a substantial meal, although insufficient for our hunger. As we were making the meal, the mother of the boys arrived and she didn't believe our story that we were soldiers, and immediately expressed her support for the revolutionaries. They gave us directions and we left at nightfall. At around 6:00 p.m. we ran into a peasant[22] whom we forced to take us to the Magdalena River; we told him we were heading for a place called El Roble. At 11:00 that night we reached the river and slept there.

27

Early in the morning we climbed up a hill that we had already passed on our way to the attack at La Plata. We spent the day there without eating. Guillermo went to cook at the home of […].[23] In the evening Eutimio arrived bringing specific news. He had arrived at Palma Mocha the day of the battle and heard it from a distance. He was hidden all day at a friendly house that the soldiers came to and he learned that the soldiers planned to attack the next day. He left early the next day to warn us in case we were still there, and found the ashes of the house of Delfín [Torres] and three corpses eaten by vultures.

He followed our trail and discovered that troops were chasing us and they attacked, or rather were attacked, in El Infierno.[24] Then he went to El Mulato where he found that 11 houses had been burned, but not his. The victims of the arson known to us were Enrique, his father-in-law Fico, Orestes and Antonio Cabrera. From the last one they took merchandise destined for us and took him away as a prisoner. At dusk a kid called Chichi García arrived; he was very nervous and talked a lot, and said he had two grenades, which he promised to give us, as well as some goods such as rice and beans. We also received information of a very good place, and nearby are the cattle of the Núñez company. We ate more or less well, but only

once during the entire day. We slept in the house, ignoring the lessons of our own experience.

28

Eutimio left us for a week because his mother was sick. Rey, one of the three from Manzanillo who was still with us, also left; he had decided he wasn't up to this. Sergio Pérez left along with Eduardo (on leave) and so did René,[25] who is going to Havana with various tasks, but in reality on something like indefinite leave. Ramirito[26] is with a group that includes Ciro [Frías] Cabrera, who has a large order from us, Yayo [Castillo], the guy who came from Manzanillo and was left behind sick, and eight more men from Manzanillo, apparently all with rifles. An order given to Chichi Mendoza came during the night. This consisted of cigarettes, cigars, honey, sugar, rice and beans, salt, coffee, lard and condensed milk.

29

Things have been organized so that the kitchen is down below, next to a stream, and the camp 200 meters higher, in a rocky position. There we have made some temporary little huts. We began building mine with Luis [Crespo] and [Manuel] Fajardo. There is plenty of food and it promises to become even more abundant, because we sent Morán to butcher one pig and he killed two. Morán is head of the lookouts below and he carries out multiple functions, going on looting expeditions to all the nearby huts.

We have a new combatant, a nephew of Chichi Mendoza, who came to us by following our trail and to whom I spoke about the conditions for joining our movement. He [Evangelista Mendoza][27] is 20 years old and says he is joining to avenge the killing of his father by one of Batista's men. At dusk Fidel gave a speech to the troop to warn about the dangers of indiscipline and demoralization. Three crimes will be punishable by death: insubordination, desertion and defeatism. I was invited to go on a small excursion, but stayed behind to have a talk with Sergio Acuña and Ignacio Pérez, who had decided Fidel's speech was directed against them. Late at night Crescencio arrived at the upper camp, having become lost. I went down with Calixto García to find him. Morán and the new kid, who knows the area, remained at Evelio's hut, waiting to make contact with a man who will connect us to Ciro [Frías] Cabrera.

30

The night was very cold in the recently constructed lodging when I was awakened by planes overhead at very low altitude.[28] The others were

already packing up when the strafing began. People started to come up from below. Cienfuegos had lost all his bullets; I gave him 10. People were fleeing toward a dry creek bed near the camp. I stayed for a while, waiting for people from the kitchen but they didn't come. I then went to the stream and asked for an automatic rifle that I traded for my rifle with a telescopic sight in order to return to the camp to get some things, including the radio, that had been left behind when everyone fled. The situation was very confusing; no one knew what was going on. The first bursts of machine gun fire had hit the cooking fire, but we did not know if there were also troops nearby. We suffered no casualties. I returned with Chao to the upper camp to retrieve various things, among them Fidel's cap with the commander's star on it and two Mexican rifles.

We had been ordered to regroup at the cave (Cueva del Humo), but the only thing I knew about it was the name and that it was in a westerly direction if one followed the line of the hill. When we returned, no one was around and we had to follow a not too clear trail. After going a certain distance we stopped, hiding on the edge of the path but dominating it, in order to rest and eat some of the sugar we had with us. That's when Guillermo García showed up with Sergio Acuña. They had been the last ones to leave the kitchen. We remembered that Morán had left his telescopic sight there, and Guillermo and I decided to retrieve it. When we got down there *el Gallego* Morán showed up from the other side. It had been a while since the planes had stopped bombing. From what he said, we learned first that there were five planes and second, that there were no troops nearby. He had gone through a special drama because a snitch called Lalo Milán had fired at him at point-blank range without wounding him. Morán had carried the Springfield that had been assigned to the new recruit which he lost in the shooting.

We made the return trip, loaded down like mules. When we reached the camp we lightened our load by eating all the sugar cane that I had brought, half a can of sausages and some honey. We followed the trail of our compañeros until we came to a path and lost them. There we came upon a devastating sight: the houses of those who had sympathized with the movement, or at least disagreed with the government, had been burnt to ashes. A small cat meowed pathetically and a pig ran away, grunting—that was all. We made camp near a stream and spent the night there.

We took a position at the top of a hill overlooking farmland where we supposed the Cueva del Humo [cave] was located. Guillermo and I reconnoitered the surrounding area, but only found evidence of Batista's troops and none of our people. Sergio Acuña, who was on guard duty, thought he had seen two persons, one of them wearing a cap. But while he called us he lost track of them and we didn't see them. Given this, Guillermo and I went all the way down to some huts that looked empty at the other end of the valley. No one was there and nothing had been left behind either, so we went to the house of a friend of Guillermo's on the banks of the Ají River. The man was very frightened when he saw Guillermo but he gave us a little food and offered to have more at his house; but he would not bring it to where we were because of the danger. He said that the Rural Guards took all the goods that Ciro had sent and burned them, requisitioned the mules and killed the driver [Eliécer Tamayo]. They burnt down Ciro's store and took his wife prisoner, although they later released her. Two hundred men had come through in the morning under Major Casillas, and had slept near the house that has been mentioned. Then we took a long walk uphill and reached the camp without incident.

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1. Juan Lebrigio lived in the area and took them to the home of his brother Rafael.
2. Translator's note: A *legua* (league) does not have a very standardized definition in distance. In general, it is how far one can walk in an hour or so, somewhere between 4 and 7 kilometers. Che is probably saying here that it took them five or six hours to cover a distance that should have taken them two to three hours.
3. Eloísa Ramírez and her husband Florentino Enamorado.
4. Eligio Mendoza was in charge of leading them to the home of the peasant Eutimio Guerra.
5. The home of Evelio Saborit Rodríguez.
6. Alfonso Espinosa was a resident of the area, who had a certain reputation as a peasant leader.
7. Tomás Osorio (*Chicho*), Miro Saborit and Honorio Olazábal.
8. Eutimio Guerra betrayed the rebels and was ordered by the Rural Guards to kill Fidel. He was captured and executed.
9. Adalberto and Evaristo Díaz Mendoza.

10. These events are described in the chapter “The Battle of La Plata,” in Che’s *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*. It actually took place in the predawn hours of January 17, 1957, although preparations began on January 16, which is why Che combines all the events in a continuous narrative.
11. Victorino Peña and Jesús Fonseca.
12. The corporal’s last name was Bassols; Miro Saborit was a heartless foreman of the Núñez Beattie Company.
13. The home of Delfín Torres was located in the area known as Llanos del Infierno.
14. After learning of the battle at La Plata, the dictatorship’s high command sent a well-equipped troop under the command of then-lieutenant Ángel Sánchez Mosquera, confirming Fidel’s calculations about the coming battle. The shots heard were fired at the peasant Nicolás Pérez, whom the soldiers forced to serve as guide, and when he refused, they wounded him and then finished him off the next day.
15. See “The Battle of Arroyo del Infierno” in Che’s *Reminiscences.*…
16. René Rodríguez (*el Flaco*, “Skinny”).
17. The home of Emilio Arias (*Binda*).
18. Emilio Mijares.
19. Jesús Menéndez was a leader of the sugar industry workers, killed in 1948 during the government of Ramón Grau San Martín. The person in the area was Major Arcadio Casillas Lumpuy, brother of the murderer of Jesús Menéndez.
20. A military officer who had treated Fidel Castro respectfully when he was arrested after the attack on the Moncada barracks.
21. Translator’s note: a *ranchera* is a typical Mexican song..
22. Evelio Enamorado, who lived on the heights of El Coco.
23. Che did not know his name at the time, but the reference is to Felo Garcés.
24. See “The Battle of Arroyo del Infierno” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
25. René Rodríguez went on the mission to convey Fidel’s instructions to the leaders of the July 26 Movement in Manzanillo, Santiago and Havana. In the latter, he was to contact Faustino Pérez with the objective of moving forward quickly with the effort to bring a reporter to the Sierra Maestra.
26. Translator’s note: Che sometimes refers to Ramiro Valdés as “Ramirito.”

27. Evangelista Mendoza was the nephew of Chichi Mendoza.
28. The events of January 30 and February 1, 1957, are recounted in the chapter “Air Attack” in Che’s *Reminiscences.*… The precision of Batista’s attack created great confusion among the guerrillas because they did not yet know that Eutimio Guerra had betrayed them, and that he had, from a small plane, pinpointed the exact position of the camp, but which Fidel had moved a few hundred meters away as a precaution.

February 1957

1

It was a cold and windy day with no sign of a meeting. We did not explore in the morning because we were still tired from the march the day before. At around 11:00 in the morning, we heard an exchange of gunfire coming from the other side of the hill and then, closer to us, pitiful cries that sounded like someone calling for help. All these things destroyed Sergio Acuña's spirit and at noon, silently, he left the camp, leaving behind his weapon, cartridge belt and blanket. He took with him a peasant's hat, a can of condensed milk and three sausages.

After a while we heard a noise and, as we prepared to defend ourselves, Crescencio showed up with a long column composed of almost all our people and the Manzanillo group. From our group, we are missing Sergio Acuña, deserter,[1] Manuel Acuña, alleged deserter, Calixto Morales and Calixto García and the guy who had just joined [Evangelista Mendoza], who was lost in the shoot-out against *el Gallego*. We ate *malanga* and pork together there and then went down by the same route until we reached a clearing where we saw lights in the valley below.

We slept in the forest to continue the next day. The people from Manzanillo said the report about the seizure of supplies was not true. They had brought a good part of it, including surgical equipment and changes of clothes for everyone. This was all well hidden in the woods. I got underwear and t-shirts with insignia embroidered by the girls in Santiago. The composition of the group that joined Fidel was: Ramirito, whose leg is more or less better now, Rudy [Beto] Pesant, who had left us at El Mulato, and returned; Yayo, who had been sick at El Mulato, now recovered; Emilio Escaney [Escanelle], Adalberto Pesant, Antonio Fernández García, Lenis Ramírez Folgado, Juventino [blank space in the original] and Rafael Labrada, whom we had taken prisoner on a farm and who later joined the group voluntarily. Adalberto Pesant is the head of the group. Esteban Echevarría and Ciro [Frías] Cabrera went to Purial a few days ago and have not come back this way.

2

Today marks two months since the landing at Belice [Belic]. There are no developments worthy of note on this day; the guides reconnoitered while we slept. At 6:00 p.m. we begin to descend down the slope to then take the path that we had been on with Guillermo the day before. Guillermo and

Labrada, the latest peasant to join, went on reconnaissance without clearly establishing where we would meet afterwards; the result is that we cannot find them anywhere. I went with Camilo to the little house where they had given us food the other day, but they weren't there either. We slept in an abandoned hut and for the first time I was able to sleep in a bed, as one had been hidden in a banana grove.

3[2]

At 5:00 in the morning we set out, without a fixed course and without Guillermo García.[3]

Notebook II

[February 3 continued] We soon came to an unoccupied hut where our presence had the same effect as a bomb exploding, but nevertheless they gave us boiled plantains, the only thing we had to eat all day. We crossed La Derecha Creek and continued to climb uphill to reach the property of old Eustaquio [Eligio Mendoza]. But Crescencio made a mistake and we walked all day without finding the hut, finally camping on a ridge of the same hill.

4

At night I had one of my sporadic attacks of malaria and by dawn I was completely exhausted, so I couldn't continue the march. *El Guajiro*[4] Luis Crespo and Julio Acosta stayed behind to accompany me. About three hours later I tried walking, but very slowly and stopping frequently because I had fainting spells. Julio then went ahead to ask for someone to return to carry my pack in order to lighten Crespo's load because he was carrying it. I continued to advance haltingly and suffering terrible diarrhea, having to go 10 times this day. When the sun set we reached a place that seemed to be very poor; we made a camp right there, putting up with a downpour all night that fortunately did not make us very wet.

5

We made a mistake in our direction, but fortunately we soon corrected our course. I had very little energy to walk so our progress was very slow. At around 11:30 a patrol commanded by Raúl found us. He brought chicken soup, which worked wonders on me. We reached the camp and I then went down to the house to sleep beside *el Gallego*, who had a bad leg and, according to him, a fever. That afternoon a group led by Crescencio set off for La Habanita. In it were: Crescencio's son Ignacio, Ramiro, whose knee is not yet perfect, Benítez, Pancho, Chao, Rudy Pesant, Antonio Fernández

and Jesús Ramírez, who sounded a discordant note by claiming that he had been lied to, saying that he had been told he was going to a camp with a lot of anti-aircraft defenses and he would not have to walk like a mule, without food or water. Everyone will stay here to recover and be reserve troops, while the best ones will remain with us.

At midnight Enamorado, the owner of the house, woke us to say that troops on horseback were coming and, of course, we exited rapidly with all our stuff, but it was a false alarm. We slept the rest of the night at the kitchen.

6

The day passed with no activity, except for the arrival of Ciro Frías, who came with Echevarría bringing three new volunteers, a cousin, Signio Frías, and two brothers, Enrique and Miguel Díaz.[5] They brought very good news: Faustino has collected $30,000 and hopes to make it to $50,000; sabotage was continuing throughout the island; Díaz Tamayo[6] seems to be inclined to do somersaults. Intercepted army communications and news from other sources all indicate there is great discontent. They also brought news of a sad but instructive incident. Sergio Acuña had gone to the house of some cousins and told them a hundred tales about his exploits and the weapons he had. The result was that someone called Pedro Herrera snitched on him, and the Rural Guards came, with Corporal Roselló in command. They took Sergio, tortured him, shot him four times and then hung him. It is likely that he talked a lot so we have to leave Florentino's house as it was one of the ones he knew about. *El Gallego* Morán is sick, half real and half his inveterate theatrics. Eutimio left and brought back 50 cans of milk and some cigars.

7

After a good lunch we set off without a clear destination, leaving the house behind. In reality, what we did was march a couple of kilometers and made camp by the bed of a dry creek. As the sun was setting, a commission headed by Ciro Frías went to his house to get some food. Universo, Julio Acosta, Echevarría and Ciro's cousin, Signio, also went. Shortly after they set off an enormous downpour began, wiping out our precarious defenses against the rain. We were forced to sleep half wet and most uncomfortable for the entire night.

8

The first light of day brought the welcome surprise of five hens transformed into a stew by the expeditionary group and a jar of sugar. They also brought various preserves, beer and grain. The men brought the news that they had seen Eutimio in a nearby house where they had gone to ask for the key to Ciro's house. Eutimio had gone on the pretext of collecting some bullets he had left behind when he was buying milk, so his presence in that house was neither justified nor authorized.

We spent the day quietly, in the morning listening to the air force bombardment of Caracas Peak. At dusk, as we were finishing the French class with Raúl, it started to rain with the same persistence and pernicious effects as on the previous day. As soon as it stopped raining we went to the kitchen where, under Guillermo's direction, the wood was beginning to burn. By nearly 10:00 a bad vegetable stew with cassava was served, which people devoured and then began the second shift, the morning one, composed of rice, beans and vegetables. Luis Crespo and I stayed to help the cooks and we went to bed at around 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning.

9

It seemed as though there would be no new developments except for pillaging expeditions, with Ciro and *el Guajiro* Luis initiating one.[7] But at around 11:00 in the morning, Labrada captured as prisoners someone called [blank space in the original],[8] who turned out to be a cousin of Crescencio's, and Celestino's sales clerk [León], the storekeeper who supplied the cans of milk; this man indicated that there were 140 men at Celestino's place. The [Rural Guards] were on a bare ridge and could be seen leaving in formation. At the same time we questioned the prisoner we took the top of the hill, waiting also for the return of the two compañeros and Eutimio, whose strange behavior was becoming more suspicious. Furthermore, the prisoner reported that Eutimio himself had said that the zone would be bombed the next day.

At 1:30 we decided to leave the rearguard with Almeida and Julio while the rest of us climbed to a nearby ridge to await developments. A little later Ciro and *el Guajiro* came back; they hadn't seen anything strange. We were discussing this when Ciro Redondo thought he saw and heard something. I was further away and not paying attention when a shot was fired and then a volley; immediately there were volleys and explosions due to a concentrated attack on our previous camp site. The camp was empty except for a pile of abandoned backpacks and I found myself alone. I ran toward

my backpack but I had left it in a mess when I took out the blanket, and in the rush to get it together in a hurry two machine-gun or M-1 rounds landed a couple of meters from where I was standing. I thought the fire was directed at me and I took off with only the blanket I had around my shoulders. I left the books, the medicine, a rifle and all my belongings; by the time I reacted and realized the bullets had been random, it was too late and I was very ashamed. While I was with Almeida in the rearguard two more bullets struck nearby.

The group that fled wound up with 12 men: Almeida, Julito [Díaz], Universo, Cienfuegos, Guillermo, Ciro Frías, Motolá, Pesant, Emilio, Labrada, Yayo and I. We took an oblique path away from Tatequieto Hill, which is where we were to go in case we were dispersed, then return, crossing the river, and head for the Sierra Maestra. Those chasing us were close by. We heard isolated M-1 shots that were not far away from where we were headed. At 5:15 we came to a clearing where there was no undergrowth. After hesitating, we decided to wait for the guardsmen there. If they came we would open fire; if not, we would wait for darkness and then go on. Fortunately they did not come and we were able to continue on our way with Ciro as our guide. Earlier, Julio and Universo had proposed that we divide into two patrols to move more quickly and leave fewer traces of our passing, but we opposed it in order to keep the group together. We followed a stream down until we reached the Limones River, which we followed for a while and then took a path that brought us to some dense scrubland, where we remained for the night.

10

A day of total quiet. Labrada went to communicate with Fidel at El Lomón, and then to meet up with us at La Habanita with Fidel’s orders. That night we took a short hike from Dos Hermanas, where we had been, to La Habanita, where we slept.

11

We spent the day a short distance away from where we had slept. We committed a gross mistake by walking along the top of the hill in broad daylight, with no cover, but fortunately there were no consequences. We found a black man who was friends with Guillermo and who gave us a couple of meals. We were unable to reach the place where we had agreed to meet up with Labrada, and when we did get there at night, he wasn’t there.

We walked the whole first part of the night, until 1:00 a.m., when we lay down near the path. We could see El Lomón from the place where we slept.

12

When we got up and headed for a wooded area, we realized that it wasn't deserted as Ciro had assured us but, on the contrary, there were several huts nearby. However, they were abandoned and we were able to pass without problems, even though a small group that included me, Motolá, Emilio and Pesant lost our way for half an hour. We began the uphill climb through the scrubland, reaching the top by midday where we found traces left by our people. At almost 2:00 p.m. we came to a clearing high on a hill from where we could see Raúl [Barroso's] house below. Ciro and Emilio [Escanelle] went to the house and, not finding anyone there, went to another nearby house where friends gave them a frugal meal for all of us and passed on the news that Fidel was at La Derecha de la Caridad with seven men.

In addition, it is now confirmed that Eutimio Guerra has been the snitch and, not only that, it was he who had ordered the attack on our cooking site in the belief that the whole troop would be there. The tale begins after Palma Mocha, when they detained him at a bar, where they offered him his life, $10,000 and a position in the Rural Guard if he would kill Fidel. He then looked for us, joined up and then left on the pretext about his sick mother. After hearing that the [air] attack had failed, he searched for us again until he found us at the house of Florentino [Enamorado]. He sent word that we would be at a place known as El Burro. But since our plans changed, he had to leave again, on another pretext, and orchestrated the attack that would have wiped us out, but which failed due to our timely withdrawal on Fidel's orders.

In addition, it was said that Julio [Zenón] Acosta[9] had died and a Rural Guard had been killed, and that there were several wounded, information that needs to be confirmed. In 55 minutes we reached the place where Fidel was waiting for us. We were reunited with him, Raúl, Ameijeiras, Ciro, Fajardo, Echevarría and *el Gallego* Morán, who seems to have been cured of his previous ailments. That night we went to sleep at a house in a neighborhood where all the families were related to each other.[10]

13

At mid-morning we had a succulent breakfast of pork and vegetables that upset our stomachs even more because the pork of the day before had already had its effect. The day was marked by two events: first, the

desertion of *el Gallego* Morán, the very same person who conquered hills and soldiers quietly left his equipment behind, apparently following the footprints of Echevarría, who had set out for Manzanillo on foot. Second, the admission of a new member [Luis Barreras], a teacher, who claimed to have fought at Moncada, a complete charlatan. The questioning showed that he had not fought there and his problem was a team of oxen he had stolen or that were assumed to have been stolen. He confessed in order to leave the area as his neighbors suspected him, or rather, his loquaciousness, but he was warned about not violating discipline. We were to have departed in the evening, but finally decided to leave in the morning.

14

Early, after a succulent breakfast, we left walking slowly in the direction of La Habanita, the house of Domingo Torres, Crescencio's relative, and a friend of Eutimio's. We wanted to let people know about Eutimio's betrayal and to get a feel for Domingo Torres's reaction. When we came to a clearing, we heard nearby machine-gun fire and explosions, alternating with isolated rifle shots. The shooting lasted for half an hour, leaving me perplexed about its origins. The approximate location was El Piñonal, near La Habanita.

We continued on our way and found a blanket, a copy of *Selecciones*[11] and boots that seemed to have been those belonging to Ramirito Valdés. What was indisputable was that our people had been there. When we came to the valley of a dry creek, the guide went to investigate, to see if he could find friends living nearby, at a place called Cayo Probado. Soon after he left a torrential downpour began, soaking most of us because we had very little rainproof gear. After an hour of rain Dionisio the guide returned with the welcome news that we were close to the house and that he had already ordered food. We arrived a short while later, and we ate and slept there. The owner, Diógenes Suárez, reported that 15 of our men had been at Domingo's house, but had left three days ago heading to an unknown destination; he said that the shooting we had heard had only happened once before, on February 9. It seems clear that, thanks to Eutimio's betrayal, it was an ambush of our people. But who? Crescencio, those missing from the last dispersal, the people from Manzanillo or Havana?

15

It now seems that all the noise we heard was simply people from Piñoral practicing. At least that's what the owner of the house says; he went to

inquire near the disturbance. During the whole afternoon we heard the firing of mortar rounds. The noise seemed to be coming from various directions, but the most widely accepted thesis was that they were firing at Dos Hermanas Hill, which we had passed through several days ago. When it was time to eat a delicious *chilindrón*[12] of goat, we had an unexpected visitor: *el Gallego*, with another of his stories. He said that while he was going hunting he saw Eutimio near the camp and he followed him the entire day until he became lost and was unable to return to the camp that day.

The truth is that Dionisio Oliva, who had brought *el Gallego*, said that Eutimio had been by his house, but the day after that mentioned by *el Gallego*. At that time Dionisio was with us, so he could not bring Eutimio to us because the idiot stubbornly hangs on the belief that we don't suspect him. He told Juan, Dionisio's brother, that he was with the Rural Guards and that he had a plan to kill Fidel with one of the two grenades he had and to clear the way with the other. *El Gallego*, who was at Juan's house, was ready to kill Fidel but Juan was against it, according to *el Gallego* Morán's own version, to avoid a scandal in the neighborhood. It is very difficult to know for sure what *el Gallego* is thinking, but I believe he was trying to desert but had to abandon the attempt against Fidel because he couldn't find Echevarría, who presumably would have been his guide. I recommended he be shot then and there, but Fidel put off the matter.

When night fell we left the *prieto's* [dark skinned guy's] hospitable home and headed toward Epifanio's place. On the road, we came upon Domingo Guerra's store and, as there was no one there, we went in and discovered a paradise of canned food. We ate as much as we could and, after leaving traces of our passing in the opposite direction, we continued our march.

At 3:00 in the morning we passed through a hamlet called El Jíbaro, and a little later we reached a small wood that belonged to old Epifanio. We camped there and I ate two large cans of sardines that upset my stomach. We slept only a few hours because we only lay down at 4:30 a.m.

16

We stationed ourselves in some bushes on the edge of Epifanio's farm and we sent Ciro to gather information; he returned immediately with good news. Luis Crespo, Juventino, two of Epifanio's sons [Enrique and Miguel Díaz] and Ciro's cousin came with him. Juventino had a slight wound in one finger that had been grazed by a bullet. Frank [País] and Celia

Sánchez[13] came from Manzanillo and Santiago. We went to the camp, which was a few meters from ours, and proceeded to distribute treats which, of course, provoked a bout of indigestion. Frank's sister, Vilma,[14] arrived late in the afternoon with Haydée Santamaría and her husband Armando Hart. From various conversations I detected apparent anticommunist sentiments in most of them, especially Hart.[15]
Nevertheless, a document was signed by the July 26 Movement that proposed a series of fairly advanced revolutionary decrees, although some as lyrical as the announcement that diplomatic relations would not be established with the Latin American dictatorships.

During the night we heard that a correspondent for the *New York Times* [Herbert Matthews] would be coming to interview Fidel. So the members of his squadron and the visitors, among them Faustino, went off to sleep in a cabin and wait for the journalist; but *el Guajiro* Luis, who was our guide, lost his way and, after meandering about for a while, we finally had to sleep outdoors most uncomfortably.

My vaporizer is broken but Haydée Santamaría, who also suffers from asthma, has promised me hers.

17

We spent another day at the same place discussing operational plans among the leading members of the movement. The *New York Times* journalist arrived with [Javier], the son of Felipe Pazos, the famous economist, as his translator.[16] I did not witness the interview but, according to Fidel, the guy was friendly and did not ask leading questions. He asked Fidel whether he was anti-imperialist and Fidel answered that he was, in the sense of having an ambition to free his country from economic chains, but not in the sense of hating the United States or its people. Fidel complained about the military aid the United States was giving Batista, showing how ridiculous it was to claim that these weapons were for the defense of the hemisphere when Batista's forces couldn't even finish off a group of rebels in the Sierra Maestra.

The gringo left early and I was on guard duty when I was told to redouble my watchfulness as Eutimio was at Epifanio's house. He was ordered to return with a patrol led by Almeida and he was captured without difficulty. Three grenades and a .45 caliber pistol were taken from him. The patrol included Julito, Ciro, Cienfuegos and Ameijeiras. Eutimio was brought before Fidel and a safe conduct pass, issued by the army in his

name as a collaborator with the regime, was found on him. Eutimio fell on his knees and asked to be shot at once. Fidel tried to trick him into thinking that his life would be spared, but Eutimio reminded Fidel of the scene with Chicho Osorio and did not allow himself to be deceived. Then Fidel told him that he would be executed[17] and Ciro Frías launched into a deeply felt sermon as someone who had been an old friend. The man waited for death with a certain dignity. There was a tremendous rainstorm and everything became dark. It was an uncomfortable situation for the men and for him […].[18]

We slept very badly, wet and I had some asthma.

18

We put an end to the Eutimio problem early in the day, burying him right there. All the men prepared to depart. Guerra [Matos], our link with Manzanillo, brought a lady,[19] a great admirer of the movement […].

Fidel is drafting a manifesto that is to be sent for publication. The document is strongly worded but not dogmatic. The plan is to also print 250,000 copies of the first manifesto, which really is revolutionary. The two documents complement each other well. Frank went with Faustino, Guerra and the lady already mentioned in one direction. Hart and Haydée, with Celia and Vilma, left by a different route.

At that moment we heard a pistol shot and we heard a shout saying, “It’s nothing”; then *el Gallego* Morán shows up wounded by a .45 caliber bullet in one leg. The exit wound is in the lateral condyle of the femur, but I couldn’t tell the degree to which the bone was involved. I gave him emergency treatment, giving him a shot of penicillin and leaving him with his leg stretched in a splint. At the time of the incident, both Fidel and Raúl accused him of having inflicted the wound intentionally. I am not sure one way or the other. Ciro Redondo, who was an eyewitness, insists it was an accident, saying *el Gallego* rushed out to stop a kid on horseback passing by who turned out to be a member of the household.

We left at nightfall, but *el Gallego* could not move and so he had to stay there, alone, and I suspect with feelings about not being appreciated.[20] Celia Sánchez agreed to send him to Manzanillo to a movement clinic.

We reached Epifanio’s house and there we had a banquet that I could not share due to terrible bloating that the chocolate had caused. From there, we parted with the girls and Hart, and also Echevarría and Motolá, who are going on special missions. Of the women, Haydée seems to be the one with

the clearest political ideas and Vilma the most interesting one. Celia Sánchez is very energetic. Armando Hart is open to new ideas. We slept comfortably in a patch of coffee bushes.

19

A quiet day. After the frenzy of the wounded, the visitors and the execution, we just moved to a narrow overgrown strip by the Jibacoa River. *El Gallego* Morán remained at the other place without help for the day; as we were leaving Emilio, one of the men from Manzanillo, suffered a bad hernia attack that I believe was not faked, and we had to leave him until he can retrieve the hernia belt he left at his house.

For our farewell, we had lamb stew at Epifanio's house and passed through some scrubland to reach the store belonging to Enio [blank space in the original]. Earlier he had offered his store, and now was more reserved, although the sales clerk, a mulatto called Pedro, treated us very well. We already knew him from El Mulato and he sold us an astonishing number of cans. Right there, in a nearby coffee grove, we spent the night, the 17 of our group and three members of the *Granma* expedition who had joined us: Gil, Sotolongo and Raúl Díaz. The stories they told of their adventures were essentially the same as ours: separated, wandering around in the woods without food. They wound up at Ojo del Toro, and from there, friendly folks guided them to Manzanillo, where they remained in hiding for two months.

Now we just have to wait for the reestablishment of constitutional guarantees[21] and a couple of new blows against small groups of soldiers, which are so prevalent in the area. During our march here we passed close to a small barracks where two days ago there were 12 soldiers. Easy prey for us.

20

A day of absolute laziness. We stayed in the same coffee plantation where we had slept. The radio announced the news of the imprisonment of Reinaldo Benítez Nápoles, "a member of the *Granma* expedition," which means he is alive. At dusk we approached the edge of the small coffee plantation where Pedro [Ponce] came to tell us that his boss sent him to offer a contribution of 100 pesos, which we did not accept. Instead, we ate a very good meal of chicken with rice, and bought more cans. At 1:00 a.m. we started a march toward La Vigía, where we arrived after two exhausting hours, due to the overload of food consumed. We slept on the top of a hill

that showed itself worthy of the name, on land whose owner we did not know.

21

We spent most of the day in a hillside coffee plantation. At 2:00 in the afternoon, Universo saw a peasant on the other side of a fence looking as if he suspected something and he was detained immediately. Then poor man received a terrible scare. Fidel told him we were Rural Guards and that he had to tell us where the revolutionaries were. He said he didn't know who the revolutionaries were, and we explained it was those guys who had taken up arms. He responded that he hadn't seen any, but if he did see strange people about, he would go to San Lorenzo to report it. Fidel then told him that we were the revolutionaries and defended the cause of the poor, but as he had shown himself willing to help the Rural Guard, he would have to be hanged. The reaction of the man, Pedro Ponce, was extraordinary. He stood up sweating and trembling, saying, "No, no, how can that be? Come on, let's go to my house and have chicken and rice."

After a tirade by Fidel complaining about how little help the peasants were giving us, we did ask for the food he offered and went to a coffee plantation next to the house where we waited for nightfall to eat. We fell asleep immediately after eating, but when the moon came out we proceeded on a short march to another patch of scrub on a hillside facing the previous one. It is worth mentioning that, in a radio interview, Reinaldo Benítez Nápoles said nothing substantial, but created the impression that the whole group had been destroyed […].

22

We spent the day lying low, no more than two kilometers from the previous place, on the side of a hill covered by dense scrubland. There were no developments during the day. On the radio we heard disturbing news: the discovery of two underground explosives factories with nine individuals arrested and the seizure of 20 M-1 carbines and 150,000 rounds of ammunition. The amounts may be an exaggeration, but obviously they found something, although the names mentioned don't appear to be people from the movement.

The only problem with our new quarters is water. At night, Guillermo, Pesant and Yayo went to the stream and brought water back for everyone. I had the first symptoms of what could be a dangerous asthma attack, as I

have no more Dispne-Inhal. Fortunately, the days are short and there are [not many] days to go until the fifth which is the date of the next meeting.

23

Another blank day. We spent it in the same place, consuming canned food. An interesting news item is that Millo Ochoa, Pardo Llada[22] and Grau[23] met with Batista, and they demanded he call immediate elections.

24

There was nothing today, save the progressive exhaustion of our food supply. In the evening Ciro and Guillermo went to old Mendoza's house, but the welcome was dramatic. The old man hid in a room and the old lady repeatedly told them to leave. Then they locked themselves in tight and the men had to return to camp. There was, however, one door open the next day: a friend of Ciro's, for whom he would "risk his head," as he put it. There was no news on the radio today as it is Sunday and the Martí anniversary.[24] But important events on a national scale are expected in the next few days.

25

A day of water and bombs. From morning we heard mortar fire and isolated rifle and machine-gun fire. As the day wore on, it kept coming closer. Finally, at around 5:30, it sounded pretty close, so we climbed to the high point of the hill and remained there until dusk, when we were able to consider our options, assuming they would sweep the scrublands we were hiding in. Ciro wanted to stay and go down to the house of a friend to eat, but it was decided we should move further away. We started the march at 7:00 p.m. and we came to La Majagua stream at 11:00, when it started to rain so we set up camp right there until morning. The food is almost all gone, we're living on chocolate and condensed milk. The radio news is good because it seems the censorship of the press will end tomorrow and the joint statement issued by Pardo Llada, Millo and Grau San Martín after they met with Batista to demand elections will be released. Everything seems to indicate that the suspension of constitutional guarantees will be lifted on February 28.

26

It was a very tense day but nothing happened. As it was already light when we began the march, we went to the first patch of cover that we found. I had bad asthma and could not sleep during the day either. We could hear sporadic mortar fire coming from the direction of La Merced [Las

Mercedes]; and from our position we saw peasants leaving in a hurry. But later on we found out that it wasn't the case.

At nightfall we crossed a patch of scrubland and wound up at the house of Emiliano [Leyva], father of Hernán, who is Ciro's brother-in-law. We learned that there was no [troop] movement in that zone and that there were troops in San Lorenzo, Vegas and Las Mercedes. At this last point there are definitely 115 men. At Emiliano's house they prepared a pork stew that, as usual, made many of the men sick. We stayed late listening to the news and then we went to bed briefly in order to renew the march at dawn. There is no news on the radio because the lifting of censorship applies only to the print media, but maybe tomorrow there might be.

27

We walked a short distance until we came to a coffee plantation covering half a hillside east of La Demajagua. The owner of the house was not present. But one of the nephews of Florentino, the one from Ají, who was occupying the house, treated us marvelously from a culinary point of view. I was unable to pay homage in the customary way because I was vomiting thanks to yesterday's pork. Where the guy wasn't so good was when it came to his tongue, which he loosened too much at the shopkeeper's house where he bought some sugar. We sent for the man but he had left, or rather we were told he had left. Nevertheless, his brother assured us there would be total silence.

At night, Hernán came to move us farther away, but I had an asthma attack and the rain and darkness made the trail impassable. So we only got as far as the house of someone called Diosdado, who wasn't at home; we took over the house and slept relatively comfortably and relatively dry. Hernán left promising to return in the morning.

Meanwhile, in Havana, radio censorship has been lifted and the news broadcasters have launched a torrent about terrorist actions that took place while censorship was in effect. But what has set a new record in anticipation was the Herbert Matthews interview with Fidel, published only three days earlier. Even though Pardo Llada had unleashed his verbal tirade against the government, the latter only answered one question, from the *Herald Tribune*, about the veracity of the interview, with the minister of defense [Santiago Verdeja] asserting that it was a cock-and-bull story and, if it wasn't, why hadn't they published a photograph of Fidel with Matthews? he asked.

28

It was a highly emotional day. The owner of the house wasn't happy and only his wife came in a panic to remove a few things. Hernán, who had agreed to come in the morning, did not arrive. All this led to Fidel deciding to leave the place at around 10:00 a.m., but then he was stalled by my asthma, which was physically preventing me from walking. We had to wait to see if the Tedral would help me and, when that failed, I had to use one of my two remaining ampoules of adrenalin.

With great difficulty I was climbing up the hillside when, at 4:00 in the afternoon, *el Guajiro* Luis saw something strange on the road from Las Mercedes to San Lorenzo. To me it looked like a cattle drive that had stopped, to someone else, troops on the march, and so on. But when Universo arrived he accidentally looked at the road to Las Vegas where he saw large numbers of soldiers climbing to occupy positions on the ridge we were heading toward. We marched uphill toward the south at breakneck speed. We hadn't walked but a few steps when we heard the first mortar round—that was the strange thing we had spotted on the road—and immediately the machine guns began to fire.

I could not keep up with the speed of the march and constantly fell back, but finally we got to the top and were able to get past without incident while the orgy of mortar fire continued. Ciro Frías was missing. He had been reconnoitering another path when the attack began. He rejoined us while we were resting on the other side of the hill in a handy stream.

We walked a little further and came to a house which we decided to tackle that night. My impression is that, despite the attack having been so close, they did not get a direct report from a snitch who knew where we were. They only knew that we were somewhere near La Demajagua. They pointed their weapons toward the stream at the bottom of the valley, but we were now high enough so that we were out of danger.

Nightfall brought torrential rain that soaked me and the asthma became so bad that for the last part of this march I had to be carried by two compañeros.[25] We were in an area called El Purgatorio and we passed ourselves off as soldiers thanks to the locals' credulity. We killed three turkeys, but there was nothing to season them with. So we had to wake the brother-in-law of the lady who owned the house (her husband wasn't there) so that she could sell us some garlic, onions, vegetables and rice. Chatting

to “Major González”[26] (Fidel), one of them proved to be very pro-Batista, but the other confessed to being a follower of Chibás.[27]

Seeing this, and due to the fact that my asthma had become so bad that I’d had to use the other ampoule of adrenalin, it was decided that I would stay there with *el Maestro*,[28] and we should tell the more reliable man who we really were, and send him to Manzanillo to buy some asthma medicine, offering him a reward for doing this. When Fidel told him who he was, the man showed signs of being pleased and agreed to do the errand in the following way. He said he would take his daughter to Manzanillo for her to be seen by a doctor, and add to whatever medicines the doctor gave her the items for me. He was given 50 pesos to do this, allowing him to brag that he was one of the most expensive soldiers of the revolution.

Fidel and his remaining 17 followers left the zone known as La Mina [Las Minas de Frío] and we agreed to meet up again around March 15 if there were no serious problems. *El Maestro* and I left the following morning, as I had slightly recovered from my persistent asthma. The news on the radio was also juicy. While the attacks continued and intensified, Pardo Llada interviewed Matthews by phone to see whether or not the interview [with Fidel] had really taken place. Matthews said that the photograph that was being demanded did exist but had not been published because it wasn’t sufficiently clear for printing; he said he would do so in the next day’s edition. Meanwhile, General Díaz Tamayo denied that the interview had taken place even more vehemently than the minister of defense, saying that it was impossible to cross the cordon of [government] troops that guard the Sierra Maestra. An unconfirmed report was released saying that another member of the *Granma* expedition is in prison in Bayamo. I think it could be either Armando, Chao, Pancho or Calixto Morales. They also announced the arrest of Armando Hart, accused of being second-in-command of the July 26 Movement.

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1. Sergio Acuña met a tragic fate. An army patrol found, captured and hanged him. See the February 6, 1957, entry in this diary.
2. Between the entries for the second and third of February there is a note: “consultation / left side / 258 pulsations.”
3. The text breaks off here and continues in the second notebook.
4. Translator’s note: *Guajiro* is the word used in Cuba for peasant. In the case of Luis Crespo it is used as a nickname.

5. In their book, *Diario de la guerra*, Pedro Álvarez Tabio and Heberto Norman Acosta identify Nieves Cabrera (*Pipo*) as Ciro Frías's cousin and Enrique and Miguel as Epifanio Díaz's sons.
6. Major General Martín Díaz Tamayo led Batista's army operations.
7. See the chapter, "Surprise Attack at Altos de Espinosa," in Che's *Reminiscences…*
8. The reference is to Adrián Pérez Vargas.
9. In the chapter "Surprise Attack at Altos de Espinosa" in *Reminiscences…*, Che describes this attack and explains that he remembers Zenón as the first student he taught to read and write in the Sierra Maestra, and added that he considered Zenón to have been "one of the great compañeros of that time."
10. A reference to the brothers Dionisio and Juan Oliva.
11. Translator's note: *Selecciones* is a Spanish language version of *Readers' Digest*.
12. Translator's note: *chilindrón* is a dish made from goat meat.
13. This was the first face to face contact between Fidel and Celia Sánchez..
14. This was the first time that Che had met these people and he mistakenly assumed that Vilma Espín was Frank País's sister. For more about this meeting with Frank País, see "Death of a Traitor" in Che's *Reminiscences…*
15. See Armando Hart's foreword to this book.
16. Felipe Pazos belonged to the Cuban Liberation Council in the United States and was a collaborator with the July 26 Movement. When the revolution triumphed, he was president of the Central Bank of Cuba, but was removed in 1960. He subsequently returned to the United States. Javier, his son, together with Vilma Espín, served as interpreters for Matthews in his famous interview with Fidel.
17. Translator's note: the Spanish term used here is "*ajusticiado*" which actually means "justice was administered," but there is no equivalent term in English.
18. The execution of Eutimio Guerra is described in "The Death of a Traitor" in Che's *Reminiscences…*
19. Liliam Mesa was in charge of transporting the journalist Herbert Matthews and those who accompanied him from Havana to Manzanillo.
20. Subsequent events indicated that Morán's wound was not an accident but rather that he was searching for an excuse to desert.

21. Batista had decreed a state of emergency but it, along with press censorship, was about to be lifted.
22. Millo Ochoa and Pardo Llada were part of a faction of the Orthodox Party that vacillated between conciliation with and opposition to the Batista dictatorship.
23. Ramón Grau San Martín was president of Cuba twice: first, in the revolutionary government of 1933, known as the government of the 100 days; and later, from 1944 to 1948, in a government characterized by corruption.
24. On February 24, 1895, José Martí, Cuba's national hero, called for the renewal of the independence struggle against Spain.
25. See the chapter, "Bitter Days," in Che's *Reminiscences*… in which he describes how *el Guajiro* (Luis Crespo) urged him on by abusing him as an "Argentine son of a…"
26. Fidel impersonated Armando González Finalé, who at the time was army commander in eastern Cuba.
27. Eduardo Chibás was the founder of the Orthodox Party.
28. Luis Barreras (*el Maestro*, "the Teacher") would later leave the guerrilla force.

March 1957

1

This was one of those days that memory records as uncomfortable, a viscous thing. Sitting 100 meters from the house where the meeting is scheduled, I spend 12 hours, with my asthma getting better and then growing worse, but never disappearing. Then I walk 10 steps to spend the night on an uncomfortable hillside, while the asthma has me by the throat and I am unable to sleep until the pre-dawn hours, knowing that we must wait until the next day at 3:00 to find out if the man accomplished his errand. That night three small earthquakes broke the monotony of hours of breathlessness. During the day the sound of machine-gun and mortar fire in the very spot where we had spent the previous day indicates that the troops must have had some reports of our presence in that place and that perhaps tomorrow it will scour the area where we are now. My compañero, *el Maestro*, is quite nervous, wanting to retreat further into the scrublands. We had no news today because Fidel has the radio.

2

A day of absolute quiet, sitting in the same place where I suffered during the night, waiting with hope and fear for 3:00 in the afternoon, when the man said he would return. At the promised hour he came with the Dispne-Inhal, only one container, but in addition he brought milk, chocolate and some crackers. Given my gnawing hunger, I attacked the chocolate and I think this meant the medicine only partially relieved my asthma. That night I still couldn't walk and, because it looked like there might be rain, we went into the hut we had taken over the previous night, which its owners had abandoned because they have another house further up. I slept a little better there, but still without much improvement.

The lack of news is almost total. The only news José Isaac brought from Manzanillo is that the constitutional guarantees had once again be suspended, but he was unable to tell us anything about press censorship.

3

A day marked by a spiritual victory and a bodily defeat. My asthma is almost as bad as when I didn't have the medicine, but we must reach the designated place by March 5; I had to deploy all my willpower to climb a hill in five long and exhausting hours that normally would have taken me an hour. Moreover, if you factor in that I had only had some milk and had not eaten well for several days, you can have an idea of what it was to climb

that slope. At 6:00 p.m. I reached the top, which was my minimum goal, but I didn't make it to Diosdado's house for a meal because I ran out of energy and it was impossible to see anything in the dark. I ate half a chocolate bar, and the asthma intensified immediately, but with the tranquilizers I was able to rest a bit during the night in preparation for the exhausting day ahead.

4

The day exhausted me but was not fruitful. At the end of the day we are at La Demajagua Creek. I went down early to Diosdado's house only to find there was no one there. Nevertheless, *el Maestro* was fearful of approaching houses and did not show himself the entire day. I spent the day watching from a lookout point and saw no signs of life in the neighborhood. At 6:30 p.m., when I had already assumed that *el Maestro* was a deserter, I went down and found him. His attitude wasn't clear but I yanked his balls and offered him the opportunity to leave the movement, which he did not accept.

After walking for a while, and seeing the occasional tree with its branches blown off by the bombardment, we reached the house of the old lady Aldana, whose sons had fed us once when we were in the area of La Plata River. The old lady welcomed us warmly, giving us a hug and crying a little when she told us that the bombing had almost killed one of her sons. But she had no food, so we went on with empty stomachs to the next house. This was Sarvelio's house, whose nephew Enamorado had treated us very well previously. His wife cooked white rice and fried eggs, which were very good for my stomach; but my asthma persisted and I couldn't go 10 steps without stopping. To top it off, *el Maestro*'s nervousness had led him to come to an understanding with our guide to take us on a roundabout route, which meant I arrived exhausted at Hernán's house at 2:00 in the morning, when I could have been there at 12:00, ready to continue and reach our destination. We slept there under a roof, taking refuge from a downpour in the pre-dawn hours.

5

We can already admit to the failure of the mission because we have been unable to move and tonight was the deadline for the meeting. At dawn, we knocked on the door of the old man Emiliano, who was very scared, but not as scared as the son. They said the area had been betrayed and that there were Rural Guards all over the place; that it was impossible for us to remain and that we should head up along the stream to a wooden house, where he

would wait for us. As bad as I was, we went to some bushes beside the stream and remained there until dusk when a friend of *el Maestro*, Raúl, showed up looking for him. From Raúl we learned that the local peasant Armando Rodríguez had passed through here with his machine gun, but in civilian clothes, on February 11, that is two days after the attack at Espinosa.

We went to eat at the house of Emiliano, the old man, where we heard that Hernán had departed for Manzanillo. It seems that on the day of the attack, he was coming to see me with Luis Rodríguez when a shoot-out caught them by surprise. Emiliano's daughters had all the spirit that the men lacked and were very amiable. Emiliano took us to the house of the Rodríguez just mentioned, who was to have led us to the high ground above La Vigía, but he informed us that there were 200 Rural Guards scattered between Cabrera's and Epifanio's houses. Under these conditions, and given the state of my health, it wasn't worth attempting it; so we remained in hiding by a stream and Luis will go to the Jíbaro area to see how many Rural Guards are on the farm and then take us directly to Epifanio's house by a much shorter route.

6

Everything turned out badly. Old Emiliano saw, or thought he saw, four Guards when he returned to his house and his fear was so great it broke the shitmeters. He infected Luis with his fear, so he did not go to Jíbaro; but in the evening he brought us the news that the zone was full of Rural Guards; he refused to guide us to La Vigía because it was too dangerous. So we lost a day, and we would have to try to get to La Vigía on our own, despite my bad physical condition, or return to El Purgatorio Hill, near Raúl's house, which is what we had to do. Before starting the march I gave myself an adrenalin injection. I was able to make it with relative ease to the forest that is not far from where we are going and we spent the night there under light rain. Our plan is that Raúl should bring us food once a day for two days, and then we go to the scrublands on the high ground and we'll see what eventuates.

The men have turned out to be no good. Luis took five pesos for food and Raúl asked directly for them for shoes, although what they've bought doesn't match what we paid. Now we only have to wait to see if we make it to the scrublands because it is said that Elio Figueredo's warehouse was

raided due to reports that it had delivered supplies for 20 rebels. It is strange how news spreads in this area.

7

A totally wasted day spent looking at the clock and counting the hours until food arrived. It came at 5:30 and was insufficient for my immense hunger. Raúl came to tell us there was a practical way to get to La Vigía, but given previous experience and bad food, we decided to provision ourselves with food and depart the following evening in order to reach Epifanio's property in one day. Raúl and a younger brother told us the story of Chichi Mendoza's death. Apparently he was turned in for personal reasons, and was executed by machine-gun fire. Evangelista, the recruit we lost during the bombing of El Mulato, was wounded in the leg.

8

Our mission has now been a total failure. We moved at night, emerging from the woods to a little house that belongs to Hernán Pérez. Luis was waiting for us there, and he guided us by a good path to where we could easily follow the route. His advice was that we should wait in a coffee grove, but I wanted to take advantage of my feeling better; the result was that at 1:00 in the morning we were lost somewhere near Epifanio's place without being able to find it. We slept in a coffee grove for what remained of the night. The last bits of news that Luis gave me appear true: that León Hirzel, Jimmy's father, has taken up arms in Bayamo; and that three young North Americans have joined the rebels. The first news item made sense, and the second I had already heard from Frank.

9

We spent the day in the coffee grove. At dusk, we heard a single rifle shot. There were no other developments. We descended, skirting around the corrals, toward the road to Las Mercedes. There the problem became which way to go and we spent long hours lost due to *el Maestro*'s lack of a sense of direction, despite the fact that he had been living in the area for nine months. Finally, near dawn, we arrived and slept for a bit so as not to knock on Epifanio's door at such an untimely hour.

10

I called after 5:00 a.m., at first light, but they, fearing a trap by the Rural Guards, refused to open the door. We had to wait until daybreak, hidden among some bushes, fearing the worst. But there was no problem, they were just apprehensive. They treated us very well and immediately we went

into a thicket near the house where we spent the day, taking advantage that today is a holiday for the government forces.[1] The news about Fidel is not good. Government troops attacked them at the Meriño ridge and they separated into two groups: Fidel with 12 men and, in the other, Ciro Frías with six men. When they knocked at the door of a house, the people inside opened fire. They all hit the ground and dispersed. Yayo wound up at Epifanio's house after the shoot-out without a rifle, without a uniform, and telling very dark stories about what had happened. Friendly people took him to Manzanillo. We know Ciro Frías is alive in the Sierra Maestra, but we have no news about Fidel. I've already established contact so that the people from Manzanillo will come to see me tomorrow and we can coordinate action plans to bring 15 men to where Fidel ordered me.

The situation in that zone is not bad. Epifanio's family hasn't been bothered much; the farm was not searched, and only Miguel was taken and released after a few hours, due to the petitions by his neighbors and their commitment to be responsible for him. Enrique left the area.[2] I was upset by the news of [Emilio] Labrada's death; he was taken prisoner in a house in the days after we were dispersed after the attack at Espinosa. Apparently he found no one at El Lomón, so he just hung around in the house doing nothing. That's how they got him. It's an old habit that some people can't break: abandon your weapon and goof off at a house. Apparently Batista spoke on the radio but the people here didn't hear it so I don't know what the tone of his speech was.

11

Another day gone by without external events to mark it. Batista's speech sparked a lot of commentary from the opposition who attacked it bitterly because he failed to offer a formula for reconciliation. The head of the group that will be coming up here came to see me; I don't know his name, he seems strong willed and a little too full of himself.[3] He demanded that Ciro [Frías] Cabrera come to discuss with him the best route; so I immediately sent Dionisio, who had been sent by Ciro to see how things were going, to bring him tomorrow night. So the day after tomorrow, we can meet again with the leader of the Santiago group and head to the mountains. He brought the medicines I requested and some books sent by Celia, as well as the news that Frank is in prison. The man was critical of Fidel, and I think he is right on this, for making public his intention of being

at Epifanio's on March 5 to receive the new troops because all the roads were then blocked.

12

A dull day waiting for Ciro. Nothing new to add to what we know. Eating well.

Notebook III

13

I had barely opened my eyes when Ciro showed up with Dionisio. He immediately told me what had happened. It seems that a misunderstanding on Luis Crespo's part led to the group dividing, with 12 men going with Fidel. Yayo was the one who brought the wrong instruction. After going around looking for Fidel they came upon a house with an unknown number of Rural Guards, who opened fire on them. Ciro and Fajardo withdrew to one side, Guillermo to the other, talking about a bullet in his helmet but leaving his rifle or backpack. Pesant and Juventino made it to La Derecha, and then Yayo came through here with tragic news. After a while Sotús showed up—that's the name of the man from Santiago—with Guerra, and we came to an agreement to mess with people on March 15 or 16. There were no developments here today, but we heard about an attempted assassination of Batista, as a result of which, the student leader [José Antonio] Echeverría supposedly died.

14

We had a pleasant day with plenty of food. I asked Pepe Rojas to come tomorrow; he's a bar owner who had offered us $100 of merchandise for whenever we needed it. The radio reports, subject to censorship, are not true. It appears that the terrorist group took the first two floors of the presidential palace while Batista was on the third floor and the navy came to his aid, killing everyone they found. One group did manage to escape. What is not in the least bit clear is the death of Pelayo Cuervo,[4] who was not where the assassination attempt took place. Also Menelao Mora[5] is listed as dead; he had avoided jail through an audacious escape from those who were chasing him. We still lack a clear picture of these events.[6]

15

The day went by with no major developments. As night fell we had our last hot meal for who knows how many days. After a short walk we arrived at the meeting place, where the road to Manzanillo crosses the Tío Luque [Tío Lucas] Creek and waited. After a while a truck came by to collect sand, and

Ciro thought they were Rural Guards unloading machine guns. The alarm subsided when he verified that they were just two harmless sand shovelers. After a while Pepe Rojas turned up as arranged, bringing two boxes of canned milk, one of chocolate, beef jerky and other items. We waited in vain for the arrival of our troops. At 5:00 a.m. we were about to leave when a peasant appeared on the road without giving me time to hide. I pretended to be a Rural Guard and reprimanded him for traveling at night; but Ciro came out to see what was going on and we were identified as revolutionaries because the man knew Ciro. We ordered him to maintain the strictest silence and we hid in the bushes beside the stream until we can find out what happened to our people in the morning.

16

Early in the morning one of Epifanio's sons visited us and told us what had happened. Because of the rain, the trucks transporting people had run into a ditch and so everyone was on foot and very heavily weighed down. They continued walking but they could not make it here. We walked to the old camp and waited there all day, finding it hard to sleep because of the mosquitoes. Late in the afternoon Enrique came to get Ciro and bring the people. We waited, some slept, until 3:00 a.m., when the men arrived, very tired, beginning with Sotús, who couldn't take one more step. Pedrín Sotto, one of my compañeros from the *Granma*, came with them. Everyone was drop dead tired and slept until morning.

17

When they awoke we took them to a nearby patch of cover where we spent the day. There are 50 men divided in five groups, but it seems to me that, despite the superficial organization that maybe lacking,[7] this troop has the same problem the old *Granma* one had: a lack of understanding of military discipline and being unaccustomed to hiking in the hills. We ate one meal, a stew Enrique sent, and people complained a fair bit. At nightfall we began the march guided by a peasant, whose last name is Lara and who has been incorporated into the troop; he has papers from Casillas. Upon climbing the first hill, already there was one person who could not carry his backpack and weapon. With everyone stumbling, stopping every 200 yards to rest, we climbed Tío Lucas Hill and made it to Prieto's house, where we arrived at dawn, once again with Sotús in the rearguard. We went into a nearby little patch of bushes and slept for a while.

18

Prieto treated us very well and fed us discreetly. Feeding 50 men is a problem of dimensions. We didn't even post a guard because everyone was so tired, but in the afternoon, a good *ajiaco*[8] helped us recover our strength. Dionisio went to La Derecha to get the others, who reached the camp at 2:00 in the morning. These were Fajardo, Guillermo, Juventino, Pesant and three Sotomayors[9] who joined recently.

19

We did nothing. People were recovering from what had been, for them, their greatest achievement in the revolution. At night, after drinking coffee, we marched to the top of a hill to wait for Dionisio and Manuel García, who had gone to get weapons from Domingo Torres's place. These were the four weapons left behind by Benítez, Pesant and the other two deserters. Domingo Torres seems to be a good man, enthusiastic and quiet. He sent me a coffee bush to plant. At around 10:00 the people with the weapons arrived, but we waited one more hour, until the moon had risen. Then we did a short march through the scrubland—short, in terms of distance—but it was two long hours before we reached a spot with some wooded level high ground where we could sleep.

20

We set out early along the hills but at a very slow pace until we got to the descent to La Derecha. Rigoberto Sánchez, the owner of a hacienda in that area, was waiting for us there and he fed us a sumptuous meal. A small council was called together to discuss what to do; several peasants participated with their ideas and rumors. I had spoken with Guillermo for him to go to Caracas with three more men, so when Ciro told him he had to go to Cilantro, Guillermo refused and a rancorous debate broke out in which I had to intervene.

We reached a place where we had been before and made our camp there. That afternoon, Guillermo set off with two of the Sotomayor family and Manuel García. I left that night, after first performing a round of medical checkups of the local peasants. We walked with Dionisio at a good clip; we left at 12:00 and we arrived at 2:40 at the house of Anguelo Marrero. Crescencio was sleeping outside with Ramiro, Chao and Pancho, in addition to Mongo Torres. Those were the 140 armed men that he supposedly had. We talked for a bit and then slept until morning.

21

I found Crescencio a bit disheartened, and he showed me a letter to the owner of a hacienda who was a friend of his denying the thing about burning the cane fields and saying that the July 26 Movement supported everything constructive but never negative things, and he asked me to publish the letter. I told him that went directly against the specific orders Fidel had given; he said that he would order that it not be published.

In the evening the medicines were brought to Marrero's house and the old man found out about the presence of the group on his property. He asked Crescencio to leave immediately and we decided to return this very night with the three from the *Granma*, Ramiro, Pancho and Chao. Ramiro was delighted, Chao and Pancho were reluctant. We agreed to wait for the Calixtos[10] until 11:00, as Manuel Acuña would not come because the people of Limones are hostile to him; Acuña had killed someone in that area. We went down to Anguelo's hut in the evening, and a little later we were served a sumptuous supper; we then slept until 11:00. That's when we set out for La Derecha, arriving at Domingo's house at 3:30 in the morning. Ramiro's leg still has not recovered fully. A little later we made it to the camp.

22

Prieto arrived in the morning bringing news of 40 Rural Guards in La Habanita. There were frequent visits but the place seems very quiet. People are unhappy with the food situation, something I tried to solve by speaking with Jorge Sotús about providing the men with two generous meals a day.

23

These days have been dry, which is a blessing for us. We wait for news from Fidel that doesn't arrive, nor from Guillermo. There is nothing new at the camp. At night I gave a talk to some of the young guys that Jorge brought, trying to explain what fighting in the mountains was like and the need for rigid discipline. They complain about the way Jorge commands them, and perhaps they are partly right. A peasant, a son of Fidencio Frías, came by to sign up. I told him what was required, and that he should sleep on it and tell me what he decides tomorrow.

24

In the morning we learned that Guillermo was below, and it was said he had already found Fidel. Anxiously we waited for news. At midday a message came from Guillermo saying he had searched for Fidel but had not found him. Later Guillermo arrived with a message from Fidel dated March 21

saying he was heading for La Derecha. All indications point to Fidel arriving in the evening. Dionisio went to El Lomón, but did not find him.

In the evening I went to see some patients at the house of a peasant woman and, as I was finishing, Fidel arrived. It was an emotional gathering with the 12 men plus a new recruit, Vitaliano Torres. Ramirito and I were the representatives of the old guard present. After eating, we remained below, drawing up plans for restructuring the force with Jorge Sotús, Fajardo, Guillermo and Ciro, who had come down upon hearing the news. We agreed to divide the force with a general staff made up of Universo, who would now be an officer, the three heads of the platoons, Raúl, Almeida and Sotús, Fajardo and *el Guajiro* [Luis Crespo] as personal bodyguards, and I as doctor. Raúl also wanted me to be named political commissar, but Fidel opposed it. Camilo will command the vanguard, Efigenio, the rearguard. The three platoons will be led by those already mentioned. Each platoon will have three squads of six men, including the leader. Ciro will also be an officer. We formed a council composed of Fidel, Raúl, Almeida, Sotús, Ciro, Guillermo, Camilo, Fajardo and me. Fidel explained his opinion that we should not attack yet; various ones supported him, and I opposed it, for political and military reasons, but I did not have much success. We decided to march through the woods to Turquino Peak, while trying to avoid a battle. We ate some meat and we remained talking until dawn.

25

We climbed to the woods and Fidel focused on reconnaissance and organizing the units. Suddenly he called me over. Salvador[11] had written from Santiago that, based on confidential information from the army, he had learned that Crescencio Pérez had sold us out and was going over to Casillas and that he was planning to turn us in at the place where we were to meet. There had been a series of coincidences, plus the experience with Eutimio.[12] Fidel met with a small group of trustworthy people and reached the decision to move on that very night. Fidel ordered a large meat ration for those who were staying. About 20 of the old timers, the three gringos[13] and Jorge would go to Rigoberto’s house to eat. Fidel gave a sort of harangue to all the combatants, pointing out weaknesses and the need to overcome them so that we can carry out the struggle. Once night fell, we all went down. We settled accounts with the people who had helped us with food in a way that I think left everyone happy. We continued on our way

once I had seen a couple of patients there, including a woman who was pregnant with her eighth child, whom she said she will name Fidel if it is a boy.

The trail to Rigoberto's place was long and difficult, and Fidel cussed with the best of them, but he got over it as soon as we reached the house, where we were received with great ceremony. The peasants of the area had come to see us, and it was an important meeting. We ate, and then Fidel decided to sleep for a while. At 3:00 a.m. we started back, but not to the same place, but to an elevated area where we were to meet up with those we had left at La Derecha; we arrived just as the sun was rising. We have a new recruit.

26

The announced restructuring didn't proceed. Fidel slept during the morning and then greeted Rigoberto, who had brought a gift of milk. They talked for a while and came up with a plan for a few days from now. Dionisio brought two more recruits, the brother and the nephew of Prieto's wife. We spent the day working, and at sunset we carried out a short, one-hour march to a ridge where we slept. We ate the last of our food; probably lean times are coming. The political news suggests that Batista continues to maneuver to buy time, but the opposition is trying to gain ground by taking advantage of his precarious position; he is also facing the potential threat of a coup that some like Pardo Llada have already discussed publicly. The civic institutions will carry out a one-day protest strike to demand an end to the assassinations in Cuba.

27

We spent the morning without moving from the place where we were because we could not get water until nighttime and Fidel did not want the troop to become prematurely thirsty. But someone in the rearguard heard a rifle being cocked, I believe as a result of the nervousness of this greenhorn troop, and we decided to leave early. Almost at the top of El Lomón, one of the Americans, the youngest one,[14] suffered a fainting spell due to exhaustion. El Lomón is 800 meters [2,626 feet] above sea level according to the altimeter we now have. Once we reached the top of El Lomón we went ahead with the definitive restructuring, and this is how the group is structured now. The vanguard, commanded by Camilo, with four men, including a guide; three platoons commanded by Jorge, Raúl and Almeida, with three squads in each one, the squad leaders are: Raúl: Julito, Ramiro

and Díaz;[15] Jorge: Ciro, Guillermo and René; Almeida: Hermes [Enrique Ermus], who had been head of platoon five, Guillermo [Domínguez] from platoon four, and Pena, with a squadron made up of students. The general staff is made up of Fajardo, Ciro, *el Guajiro* [Crespo], Universo, who is now an officer, Fidel and me.

At 4:00 we went down to a farm on the other side of El Lomón and loaded up a lot of cassava and plantain. I worked with Universo and Ciro carrying an enormous sack but downhill. The vanguard lost two men and so the platoon that came after the vanguard followed the two men. The general staff and Raúl's platoon found the right path, but Jorge's platoon and the rearguard also lost their way. Fidel threw a fit, but in the end we reached the designated house. There we boiled and ate the cassava and plantains and slept until 4:00 in the morning, at which time we undertook a two-hour march until we reached the woods.

28

Once there some slept, others ate. At 2:00 in the afternoon we started a climb, during which several of the new people suffered a great deal. It was after 3:00 when we got to the hilltop at an elevation of 750 meters. Nearby is the tomb of Julio [Zenón], and all the revolutionaries formed an honor guard there. We continued walking but we sent Ciro's squadron to where the shoot-out had taken place to get some food that had been hidden there. Guillermo's squadron was sent to the house of Bienvenido [Mendoza] to get a rifle that Manuel [Acuña] had hidden there and check out the situation with those people. We sent *el Guajiro* with Vitaliano and one other to a friendly house to prepare food for tomorrow. We had not advanced a great deal by the time night fell and we made camp in a little level area to wait for the new day.

The political situation has become openly conciliatory. There is a change in prime ministers and the new one, [Andrés] Rivero Agüero,[16] says that if necessary he would go personally to the Sierra Maestra to settle matters. The bipartisan commission of the House makes the same announcement. [President of the Senate Anselmo] Alliegro says the opinion of the rebels will be taken into account, and Pardo Llada demands this.

29

In the morning, we heard scattered, isolated shots from the direction of Limones. A mulatto called Paulino was added to the general staff. He is responsible for transporting the medicines. I had to lighten my load because

of asthma. We marched haltingly all day on the high ground between Limones, Tabaco and Caracas. At dusk we began to descend toward a ranch on La Derecha Creek, meeting up with Vitaliano, who was returning from his mission, and he reported that pork, canned goods and fat were on their way. It took us about two hours to get down to the river at night and, in losing our way, we came across some *malangas* that someone had harvested and we grabbed them all.

We went up a hill and came to a house where we began to cook the *malangas*. At 1:00 in the morning the provisions arrived, and they were divided equally. The pork lard rendered three cans of lard and four of pork rinds. At dawn we climbed a hill to get to some level high ground where we rested. The missions assigned to Ciro and Guillermo were carried out. Ciro was unable to find any sign of the food; Guillermo even obtained Bienvenido's wife's confession that Eutimio had warned them of the betrayal he was planning. Raúl's French book is there, but they did not bring it. They were given good food and honey. The political situation is the same.

30

The political situation changes: the Pelayo [Cuervo] Orthodox [Party] group refuses to discuss anything while constitutional guarantees are suspended and there is no amnesty. [Rafael] Díaz Balart[17] said there is no chance there will be talks with the "mercenary" Fidel, and the bicameral commission issued a list of all the groups it will listen to; the list does not include the July 26 Movement. We detained three peasants who were snooping about on the trail; one of them turned out to be a good friend of Ciro's. He is the future son-in-law of a man who served as a guide for the Rural Guards, apparently under duress. The young man proved to be intelligent and cooperative. They have young bulls, pigs and *malanga* for the next time we pass through. This time we only asked for coffee and sugar, which they brought as night was falling. People are learning to cook in their squadrons and they carry everything needed for eating. We agreed with the peasant Fernando that someone would go to see him the next time we came through to order things from him.

31

In a speech, Batista said that there was no reason to consult with groups that have taken up arms because such groups do not exist and Fidel is not in the Sierra Maestra.

In the morning another peasant called Celestino came by, saying he had come to let us know that there were fires all around; he said he had come on his own, without anyone telling him specifically about our presence. He said Julio Guerrero was at his house for several days, and Julio had about a dozen men he was feeding at his house. The man also had cocoa, which we bought as well as committing to buy the harvests from nearby farms.

We started climbing Caracas Peak (1,250 meters) and, when we got to the top, we met Dionisio who had a message from Crescencio saying that the armed groups [we were expecting] either did not exist or did not have weapons, but that weapons had been offered from Manzanillo; he was asking Fidel's permission to accept them. He said he could not come due to a problem with his foot. Fidel responded that he should accept all serious offers and come later with armed men.

We started the descent and in an hour we were at our old camp in El Mulato, where we had been attacked by the air force. We remained there until 5:20, when we went down to Rubio's house, where we ate and slept. The vanguard had earlier taken over the house and its occupants; there were two peasants who came with the owner and who were also taken prisoner. We bought honey and ordered more. The supply system is functioning pretty well and morale is high. We found the rifle that Universo had left behind by the creek.

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1. March 10 was the anniversary of General Batista's coup d'état in 1952.
2. Miguel and Enrique were Epifanio's sons.
3. This was Jorge Sotús. For Che's later evaluation of Sotús, see "Reinforcements" in his *Reminiscences*…
4. Pelayo Cuervo was a leader of the Orthodox Party assassinated by the dictatorship in a reprisal for these events.
5. Menelao Mora was an active fighter against the dictatorship, and one of the coordinators of the March 13, 1957, attack on the presidential palace in Havana, where he fell in combat.
6. With his comment, "we still lack a clear picture of these events," Che is evidently trying to understand what occurred in Havana with the Revolutionary Directorate's attack on the presidential palace on March 13.
7. Sic.
8. Translator's note: *Ajiaco* is a soup with vegetables and meat (chicken or beef).

9. José and Marciano Sotomayor and their cousin Ángel Emoncerrat. Che uses the shorthand in his diary to refer to the Sotomayor brothers as “2 Sotomayor.”
10. Calixto García and Calixto Morales were members of the *Granma* expedition.
11. *Salvador* was one of the pseudonyms used by Frank País.
12. This claim was quickly rejected as it lacked any foundation and despite the ever-present doubts due to the experience with Eutimio’s betrayal.
13. These young *gringos* were the sons of US military personnel at the Guantánamo Naval Base who wanted to join the Cuban guerrillas. Their names were Charles Ryan (19), Michael Garvey (15) and Victor Buehlman (17).
14. Michael Garvey was barely 15 years old.
15. Emiliano Alberto Díaz Fontaine *(Nano)*.
16. Andrés Rivero Agüero was a senator and member of the regime; he would later take part in the electoral farce of November 3, 1958, as the successful presidential candidate, a post he never occupied due to the victory of the revolution.
17. Rafael Díaz Balart was a spokesperson for and loyal collaborator with the Batista dictatorship.

April 1957

1

In his daily commentary, Pardo Llada pointed out the contradictions between Batista's denials that there were rebels in the Sierra Maestra, Barrera's[1] transfer to take charge once more of the troops operating in the Sierra Maestra, and Pérez Serantes[2] trip to those same mountains in search of the three young gringos.

At dawn we again climbed to the camp and waited there until noon; our only movement all day was going up and down Caracas Peak until we reached the hill overlooking a little house we had visited before, but which is now uninhabited. We cooked and spent the day there.

2

Pérez Serantes denies that he is going to the Sierra Maestra. A navy plane was shot down. The bicameral commission has reached an agreement on the drafting of a joint statement that, to avoid friction, eliminates mention of the date for elections. We spent the day peacefully, doing a lot of cooking, thanks to the persistent fog that hid the smoke. At nightfall we went down to the little house and, well-fed—at least as far as the quantity goes (we ate only *malanga* and beans)—we began the descent. In a short while the vanguard brought us three young peasants they had taken into custody along the way, and another one later. They were identified as people from this area. One of them was allowed to go on to his house, which was higher up, while the men went with the other three—a father, son and son-in-law—to their house, which was on a low-lying sandbank near the river. We drank coffee, and Fidel asked about some details of interest to us.

Later we followed the road until we reached the river (650 meters) and began the ascent up the hill in front of us, whose peak (1,025 meters) we reached at dawn. (We slept in a hut half-way there).Yayo went to look for a rifle that had been left in the home of a guy called Gabriel at the time when we were all dispersed. Today marks the fourth month since the landing of the *Granma*.

3

Pérez Serantes was interviewed on the radio. He said he was astounded at the report that he was going to the Sierra, something he had never said. However, the North American colony had asked him to do it, and the government is going to allow it, so he's willing to come, although he still hasn't made contact. Echevarría was taken prisoner in Purial. He had with

him Raúl’s diary, a student manifesto, photos and letters; what we don’t know is whether he gave them to someone before he was captured.

Yayo returned at 3:00 in the afternoon with his rifle and nothing new. At dusk we began a short march until we crossed to the other side of a pair of streams that form the Magdalena. We took prisoner a peasant called Ramírez, who gave us some information, including the identity of the occupant of a nearby house, Bartolo. We went there and were well received; they prepared us a well-seasoned meal. When we finished, I found the *bacalao* [fish] didn’t agree with me, so I decided to take a spoonful of Tokosima, but unfortunately the Tokosima can was full of deodorant. I swallowed three spoonsful before I realized what it was; but it didn’t do me any harm. We slept until morning.

4

We climbed up to a hacienda where we gathered *malanga* and plantains. Then we set out up a long incline until we reached the top of Vuelta de Carnero Hill (1,100 meters), where there is a magnificent lookout point over the Caracas area. We cooked there and at 3:00 p.m. we began a long descent until we reached the home of a peasant called Corrales, whom Fidel had already visited. Having sent the vanguard ahead of us, we expected to find a good meal awaiting us, but the peasant thought it would be less dangerous to cook at night and he hadn’t prepared anything yet. While they were cooking the meal I did medical check-ups of the children in the household and a lady with a fever to whom I gave Camoquin. The meal was ready at about 1:00 a.m. and we got up at 5:00. According to the peasant there had been troop movement in the area and several Guards passed by disguised as revolutionaries, and they took prisoner any peasants who offered to help them.

5

We finished the first part of the climb of the bare hill early and entered into the forest-covered mountains to continue our long ascent up what I think is called Pinar. It is 10 meters higher than Caracas (1,260 meters); from the top of the hill we took a main road that goes from Las Vegas[3] to La Plata. We walked along it for a stretch, then left it and continued along a slope where we had been before with Crescencio. We made a mistake at one point, but finally we made it to a house that had previously been empty but was now occupied by its owner, a Haitian called Miguel, who didn’t seem too afraid. We asked for Julio Guerrero, but he has taken flight; his house

was burned down and nobody could give us an exact explanation. In the Haitian's house we ate and slept; I was in a bit of discomfort caused by mild asthma. As a note of interest, they told us that 32 soldiers passed by here, and Juan Amador Rodríguez[4] announced that he was going to initiate talks with the rebel groups to bring them around politically.

6

Fifty-six Cuban exiles, in a training camp in Santo Domingo, asked for asylum in Miami and revealed that they were virtual prisoners of Trujillo in what was supposed to be a training camp to attack Cuba, but it had become a prison when the pact was signed.

There was no movement all day. We left Miguel's house early and established ourselves on a hillside where we took some Guards prisoner. Earlier, we had encountered a peasant family, whose head [Ángel Verdecia] had worked with Fidel's father. He didn't recognize him until he saw Raúl, and then we were able to send him on a mission to look for Isaac. At night we climbed up to some strategically located small houses where we could sleep in three groups. The only blot on the day was the desertion of two young black guys from La Caridad de Mata, who had already been showing signs of cowardice. We sent 2 Sotomayor to look for them, with the instructions to bring them back by any means.

7

Batista spoke today. He began the speech in the midst of a torrential rainstorm that scattered the crowd; he spoke for three or four minutes without saying anything and then took his leave. The impression is that the event was a failure, a particular fiasco because he had gathered so many foreign correspondents for it. We spent the day at the ranch, awaiting news from the men we had sent out. The squadrons gathered together on the hillside, minus the vanguard and rearguard that stayed at the entrance to the clearing. No one came all day. *El Guajiro* Luis was sent with 2 Sotomayor to explore and to neuter two beehives, but the hives were empty. They ran into some individuals who were digging a grave and they detained them for the whole day. At nightfall they went down to cook in the hut with all the squadrons returning to the mountain when they had finished eating.

8

Grau is already preparing to give his report to the conciliation council and all the parties will follow him, except the abstentionist Orthodox Party members, whose leader Bisbé[5] announced he would reject it, and the

students, who consider the Congress to be a farce. The president of the Camagüey court announced today in a radio interview that he is willing to go to the Sierra Maestra, with or without Pérez Serantes, and not only to look for the young gringos but also to initiate conciliation talks, concluding —among other ridiculous ideas—that it was necessary to pacify Cuba before foreign powers decided it was necessary to intervene.

We spent the morning in a hut, and when we had just climbed the hill, the family of the owner arrived and we took them prisoner. The man, whose last name is Peña, came with a nephew of Santiago Gómez, the grocer from Las Vegas, who had been sent out to look for salt and some other things. The owner was really freaking out, but finally he pulled himself together a little. In a little while the peasant Ronel arrived with Isaac and a small bill. Isaac appeared very enthusiastic, but he seemed rather more interested in money and not very brave about committing to bring things. At night Fidel went with Raúl and Jorge to look for some extra merchandise and to talk with Isaac about plans to send him to Manzanillo to collect some money. He returned late, annoyed because we had eaten some rice and things hadn't turned out as he had hoped.

9

The abstentionist members of the Orthodox Party are joining with Prío's Authentic Party and the abstentionist Democrats to repudiate the conciliation; they are promising a joint communiqué. Díaz Tamayo is relieved of his position as military chief in Oriente. Grau went to the meeting of the House demanding political amnesty, guarantees, elections in November 1957, new electoral ID cards and the law of [19]43.

Our work for the day was limited to moving to a new camp some 500 meters away from the previous one, but set between the mountain range and the hill in a way that makes it one of the best camps we've had. We have food for approximately three days and we're waiting for news from the Sotomayors in order to continue on to the other side of Turquino [Peak]. Today we ate rice with shrimp caught in a little stream that runs alongside our camp.

10

There was an uprising in Santa Clara, but it's not known how big it was.[6] Batista is going to send a plane with reporters to Pilón tomorrow, so they can see for themselves that the revolution has been quashed. Today 10 sugar mills finished the harvest. We spent the day in the same place, doing

virtually nothing all day, except that at night I went to see the peasant's wife who was still in bad shape. Ángel Gómez came with the salt that had been sent, but the most important thing was that he brought another peasant called Peña, who is looking for an uncle who had joined the uprising. The man gave us some interesting information, including that there is a warehouse that's been recently restocked "over there on the hill," which was attacked by almost 40 men. Another small patrol of the rearguard and vanguard went to look for Popa, the snitch, to give him a scare and take a cow from him. The peasant Peña was sent to Manzanillo to find the reporters and bring them to this or another camp. He's been told to hook up with Celia Sánchez and, if he can't find her, with the dean of the journalism college to make the contact.

At night, while I was sleeping in the hut where a peasant lived, the same troops that had gone to attack the well-stocked warehouse passed by. Later on the combined rearguard and vanguard squadrons went by—the same ones who had given Popa a good thrashing and taken a horse; but they came away with the impression that he wasn't a snitch. They didn't pay him for the horse, but they promised to do so if he behaved himself.

11

It was almost impossible to hear any news. In the morning I returned to my camp as I realized my asthma was getting worse. I spent the day doing nothing, and when the peasant came looking for me at night, I gave him some medicine and made him tell them that I couldn't go because I was taking care of a patient. The horse was killed, and everyone rejoiced except the peasants, who wouldn't eat it.[7] In our squadron those who wouldn't eat horse meat were Universo, Paulino and Marciano. It had been decided at first to leave the following day, but the idea of smoking the horse meat apparently made Fidel change his mind. I slept badly, with my asthma getting worse.

12

The reporters are mad because they weren't shown anything in the Sierra Maestra. I spent the whole day with a little asthma stretched out on a hammock belonging to *el Guajiro* (Crespo), who carried his generosity to the extreme of letting me use it that night. The horse meat has already passed the stage of being salted and is doing very well; almost everyone is eating it.

13

The CMQ[8] sent a journalist especially to interview Fidel. Barrera spoke on the radio saying that Fidel was a new Spiderman and that there was nobody in the Sierra Maestra. Alonso Pujol[9] asks, among other things, that people consider what the insurgents in the Sierra Maestra have to say. After a really good breakfast we left, slowly heading toward the road to the little house, following the men upwards. The general staff remained below waiting for news on the peasant's radio. The peasant is screwed up and money-hungry; one day he says he's leaving and then right away he stays. After lunch we climb up to the road where we spent the night, me in *el Guajiro* Luis's hammock and him in one that we bought from the peasant on the ranch. We're at 850 meters and at night it's cold.

14

Little news from outside. Cherry bombs, a couple of dead cops in Santiago, a slow down by the electrical workers. On our side they're more abundant and pretty good. We remained in the same place all day but this morning Ango [Sotomayor] arrived with Sergio Pérez. Ango and the compañero reached La Derecha in 14 hours, waiting for the fugitives who appeared three days later. They returned the revolver and the medicine and gave a lot of explanations but didn't mention security. Sergio Pérez came ahead because his father can't walk very well; he's with a small group of men who probably aren't well armed; they're waiting for another mythical group of 19 men that we don't know if it exists or not. But the good news was what they brought a letter from Celia in which she reported that Echevarría hadn't talked or taken anything. Everything is going very well, the people are working and there's money to send, although she hasn't sent it yet or the radios that were requested. The other people have shown no sign of life, waiting until the day after tomorrow for Isaac and Peña. Sergio Pérez stayed in the rearguard waiting for the people who are coming from El Lomón.

15

We set out at 8:00 in the morning, reaching the top in a little over an hour. There (at 1,150 meters) we rested a bit while Ciro and his squadron explored the trail down and Guillermo looked for the old one that we came up on after the battle.[10] Guillermo found the path down and it was decided to follow that trail with some variations. The descent was delayed a little due to some difficulties in finding a feasible path, and while we were resting and drinking some *caña santa* tea Ciro returned. After a while we reached the old camp and we surprised and frightened the family in the

house where I had killed the soldier. The other house had burnt down and the owner hasn't returned. The men decided to leave immediately, but not before telling us about the four dead. Groups were immediately commissioned to find out what could be foraged around there. We ate more or less well and we slept. I had a bit of asthma.

16

We spent the day without any real options, sending out exploratory patrols, one led by Guillermo that didn't return all night. He was going to interview someone called Emilio Cabrera, who is considered an enemy of the government. In mid-afternoon a trio was taken prisoner, including Martínez, his sister (the wife of Yeyo Mendoza) and a very provocative little black woman. There was information that Yeyo, a brother and an uncle had been sent by Casillas to spy on us. They swore up and down that they weren't spies and that they wouldn't say anything to anybody, if they were let go.

My asthma became worse. The news from the peasants we had captured was that the [constitutional] guarantees had been reestablished.

17

When we woke up this morning there was a visit from Emilio Cabrera, whose house Guillermo had gone to with two men in the search for rice. The man, who had a noble face, appeared to be a friend of ours, and among other things gave us the name of a snitch, Filiberto Mora, whom Guillermo, José [Arias] Sotomayor, Julito and Juventino went out to bring in. Fidel asked the peasant Emilio for the radio and he agreed to hand it over immediately, bringing it this afternoon. The rearguard arrived in the evening, after being caught in a heavy rainstorm along the way, bringing a radio from another peasant. It had been decided that we should leave that evening for another camp, led by Pepe Martínez and a peasant whom Ciro Frías had visited, but Guillermo didn't show up all day. At night, while we were cooking, a plane flew over the area for a while, making Fidel very uncertain about the plan, and he decided to leave at dawn the next day.

The most important news was about labor protests by the transportation and electrical workers; Cofiño[11] seems to be mediating so that the workers won't adopt a more radical position. The mediation meetings have been suspended until Monday April 22, but it seems that Batista won't accept the demand for elections to be held this year. Colonel Barrera returned to Havana and it is thought he won't return to Pilón; some of the troops also returned.

18

Guillermo arrived early with Filiberto Mora. His account revealed what kind of person Filiberto is, a regular snitch. It was also learned that Ciro had been seen by the sons of a man called Montero, a friend and compañero of Filiberto's, and although he tried to fool them with some tale or other, they realized who they really were and told their father, who planned to go to El Macho to report them. The man, Filiberto, came here thinking everything was okay, but as soon as he saw Fidel he realized what had happened and began to apologize. He had also been the troops' guide to the site of the ambush.

We continued to an abandoned house where Pepe Martínez was waiting for us with two others; one was a merchant called Lalo Sardiñas from a hamlet called Santo Domingo. He offered to serve us unconditionally and warned us about another snitch whom he knew personally, called Filiberto Mora. He was asked to provide supplies on a regular basis and they went on ahead. We followed more slowly with the column. My asthma prevented me from going more quickly. When we were approaching the place where we had elected to set up camp, Peña, the messenger from Manzanillo, caught up with us with a letter from Celia and $500. Celia told us that more money was supposed to have come with the previous messenger, but it had been sent to Santiago. Apart from this, she told us that she would locate the journalists and take them to the Sierra. Fidel decided to send Lalo to Manzanillo with a letter for Celia. There was also a report from Jacinto [Armando Hart] in which he showed himself to be positively anticommunist and even seemed to insinuate a certain kind of arrangement with the Yankee embassy. His attitude defines him.[12]

When we reached the camp the snitch was executed; 10 minutes later […] he was declared dead. As night fell the 40 men who were to bring back the supplies set out, but they soon returned because the guide, Pepe Martínez, had taken the wrong road.

19

In the morning [Pepe] Martínez and Peña set out with the instructions. Martínez was to locate a man called Marciano, who seems to be a friend of the cause, and Peña is supposed to wait for the men in Manzanillo and bring them. Martínez didn't show up all day. I spent six hours treating myself with ACTH [asthma medicine] to try to get a little better. At dusk we decide to move the next day because Pepe hadn't shown up.

20

The vanguard went off to explore when Martínez arrived with Marciano. The man hadn't proved to be a good guide and had become lost. Marciano turned out to be a good friend of the cause and had protected various compañeros, among them Raúl Díaz and Sotolongo, whom he recognized right away. He told us that this area was far from any means of communication and advised us to go to his house, which we did in three hours, with me suffering bad asthma. We arrived at the hut situated on a ridge high in the Sierra Maestra and went down to a gully with water where we camped. At night an expedition of about 40 men set out to bring back supplies, and another merchant appeared and sold us a cow for $90.

21

The men arrived with the supplies in the morning. The part that came on a mule had to be left semi-hidden because it couldn't be brought all the way up; this caused a lot of inconvenience because it was discovered by a snitch, whom we thought had been neutralized. The cow was killed and divvied up, and we all ate sumptuously. At night we got word that six people, two of them women and two gringos, were coming along the trail, brought by Lalo. They were expected the following day as [they] were going to sleep in Lalo's coffee plantation. A large number of peasants came to gawk.

The most important thing was that we had word of Armando's machine gun, which he had left in the home of someone called Cubrías. A man called Leal,[13] who had been a guerrilla fighter in the time of Machado under [Juan] Hernández's command, went to look for it. Two men from Manzanillo joined us after having searched for us for a month. They were incorporated into the group, along with two of Peña's uncles. We bought 10 quintals[14] of *malanga* from a couple of locals.

22

The reporters should have come tonight or during the early morning hours, so we changed our position to a slope near water. The transfer was done at sundown, but I took two or three times as long [as the others] due to my asthma. The general staff was set up at the highest point for the dual purpose of being better protected and to impress the reporters. Peña was sent with the new people to buy certain things to take there, such as rice and canned goods. At 11:00 p.m. the general staff received word that the people couldn't come because 10 soldiers had surrounded Lalo's house, according to what Peña learned from the woman; it seems they were betrayed by the

“shoe man.” Marciano took his family to Niquero and he joined our group. Guillermo was sent to look for the peasants who had snitched, and Camilo was to go with his people to look for the reporters, and rescue them if necessary.

23

The reporters hadn’t been taken prisoner and they are on their way, according to information from Vitalio, who had been sent by Camilo, having left the lower road on their own. The soldiers had withdrawn after being in Lucas Castillo’s house, and it seems like it was all a false alarm. Guillermo brought as prisoners two sons of the peasant who was presumed to be a snitch; according to them, the father and another son had gone to Estrada Palma on horseback. Ciro explored the ridge above us to see if it would be possible to go that way and found it viable. The father of the captured young men appeared and said that his son was the snitch. It was considered necessary to give him a good scare and he was held prisoner. In the late afternoon the reporters arrived with two Cuban youths: Marcos, in charge of actions in Santiago, and Marcelo, the translator.[15] Celia and Haydée came with two gringo journalists, Bob, a reporter, and Wendell, the cameraman.[16] They spent the whole night talking and the gringos left with a good impression of us.

24

The next day the interview [with US journalist Robert Taber][17] began with views of the camp and the three young gringos, who responded very well to the questions. The whole day was spent in that hectic activity. The old man and his sons were released.

25

We received news that a large number of soldiers were approaching. We added four new recruits. One of them came by following our trail; he said that, in any case, he would follow our trail wherever we went; another from Victoria de las Tunas had been looking for us for two months; and two diminutive Camagüeyans, who also had been following us for some time, and who seem to be a pair of adventurers.[18]

We set out for Turquino on the slopes of the Sierra Maestra, making a good day’s journey, but we were caught by the rain on the way, and took shelter in the house of a peasant, who had three sons, where we ate some flour, dried our clothes and slept.

26

Marcos left for Santiago charged with bringing back 10 machine guns, 11 Johnson rifles and six muskets; he's being led by a guide called Molineros, who knows the entire Sierra, thanks to his work distributing marijuana.[19] I'm traveling slowly, after everyone else because of persistent asthma. Wendell, the cameraman, is amazingly cowardly. The peasant who gave us shelter committed an indiscretion because he knew of our arrival and he told some neighbors, who preferred to leave the hut. After learning that some of our people had become lost, he guessed that the neighbors had betrayed them to the army, which then ambushed our men. He thought they were going to kill him and he fled, but he ran into Molineros on the way, and he convinced him to return to talk with the commander, which he did, clarifying everything because the men were only lost.

We walked along the side of Turquino Peak until we were at 1,300 meters, the highest point we have reached so far. Three others joined us: two peasants brought by Corría, who seems very talkative, and Julio Guerrero, who finally found us. Guerrero told us that they had also offered him a certain amount of money to kill Fidel, but only a modest amount: $300 and a milking cow. We were caught in a fierce thunderstorm that forced us to make camp for the night before reaching water.

27

In the morning, while we were preparing to leave, there was the sound of a muffled shot, and in a moment Almeida arrived with the news that someone had been wounded; it was Vázquez from the vanguard; he had put his hand on the barrel of a shotgun and it had fired when he made a false move. The entry wound was small but the exit had destroyed his left hand: two tendons were completely torn out and the bone was exposed. I cleaned the wound as best I could and, after bandaging it, I sent him to Manzanillo with Peña. We continued in the direction of a waterhole, where we were supposed to rest when Lalo Sardiñas caught up with us with the news that he was bringing *el Gallego* Morán, but that he couldn't make it with his wounded leg. Some people went to get the supplies and *el Gallego's* backpack, and he reached us when we got to La Aguada on the slopes of Joaquín Hill. *El Gallego* immediately proposed a tremendous plan he had, but said that was super-secret. I was still suffering from asthma, but I was willing to climb Turquino the next day.

28

The climb was started early with a large group of men; it was voluntary, but almost everyone decided to go. At the top of Turquino (1,850 meters) the interview was filmed in English for television, they did target practice there with all the weapons, but discovered that the Johnson machine gun was jammed. I arrived two or three hours later than the others, and when I tried out my Thompson I missed the can twice, taking a cartridge case for the gun with me later. We started the climb down with Ramiro and me at the rear, arriving at about 8:00 at night. I had taken about 12 hours going up and down. Joaquín Hill is 1,550 meters.

29

Today was a day of rest after the exertion of the previous day. Wendell left with Cubrías [Corrías] for Manzanillo. Marciano left for Santiago with the rolls of film. Some new volunteers came, among them Escalona, with his father, and three of those who were accepted were sent to get supplies from Lalo Sardiñas's store. At night we talked with Fidel; he had heard *el Gallego's* [Morán's] plan and had accepted it in part: he would send *el Gallego* to Mexico to bring another expedition with the rest of the men and weapons, and then he would go to the United States to raise funds and do some publicity. Everything I said about how dangerous it was to send a man like *el Gallego*, a confessed deserter, with a very low moral level, a schemer and charlatan, and an outright liar, was in vain. Fidel argued that it is better to send *el Gallego* to do something and not let him go to the United States feeling resentful, as what *el Gallego* really wants is to go to the United States and abandon all this. In that we were in agreement.

30

We awoke with the news that Escalona, who had joined the day before, had been captured by the Rural Guards and had told them everything he knew, including where we were. We had to break camp immediately. I gave myself a little ACTH and left last, except for the vanguard. Climbing Joaquín Hill with difficulty I met up with Guillermo, who was going with his squadron to shoot it out with the soldiers; I had to give him my machine gun. Arriving at the summit of Joaquín, I started to head down and I noticed that my asthma had eased; shortly I was able to join up with the column, finding that they had taken a prisoner called Restituto, who claimed he had come to join us. We reached a point that the guys recognized as the way down to the home of Angelito, a cripple who was said to be sympathetic to us. We went down and the old man was there and offered us *malanga* and a

pig, which we roasted on a spit. We slept in the old man’s little house until well into the morning.

Che in El Hombrito, 1957.

Fidel and Che, Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Che in Caney de las Mercedes, 1958.

Combatants and peasants in the Sierra Maestra.

Fidel and Che in a meeting with local peasants in the Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Che and Oni Zaldívar and the B-26 weapon he devised.

Che testing the B-26.

Che and Olivia Miranda, a teacher in the guerrilla zone.

Che and Universo Sánchez, 1957.

Che in the Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Che in the foreground with his *maté*, Fidel and a group of combatants in the background.

Che being interviewed by Jean Daniel and the photographer Guayo.

Che and other combatants in front of the banner at El Hombrito, December 1957.

Fidel planning a tactical manuever with combatants Che, Calixto García, Ramiro Valdés and Juan Almeida, Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Che during the first months of the war in the Sierra Maestra.

Che, Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Che and his mule in Pata de la Mesa, 1957.

Fidel with combatants Guillermo García, Che, Universo Sánchez, Raúl Castro, Crescencio Pérez, Jorge Sotús and Juan Almeida, Sierra Maestra, 1957.

Fidel talking with Che and Captain Evelio Laferté in La Mesa, early 1958.

Che and Celia Sánchez, 1957.

Che and Camilo Cienfuegos in the Sierra Maestra.

Che with a group of combatants, including Leonardo Tamayo (standing).

Che with the members of his Column 4, including Ciro Redondo and Ramiro Valdés.

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1. Colonel Pedro A. Barrera was in charge of the Batista army's operations in the Sierra Maestra.
2. Pérez Serantes, Archbishop of Santiago de Cuba, was known for his role as mediator during the events following the attack on the Moncada barracks in 1953 and he later collaborated with the revolutionaries.
3. A reference to Las Vegas de Jibacoa, although it is usually referred to simply as "Las Vegas."
4. Juan Amador Rodríguez was a radio commentator.

5. Manuel Bisbé was a distinguished member of the Orthodox Party and a faithful collaborator with the revolution.
6. This appears to be false information because there is no record of an action of any significance during this time.
7. See the chapter, “Tempering the Troops” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
8. CMQ was one of the original radio and TV stations in Cuba.
9. Alonso Pujol was vice-president in Carlos Prío Socarrás’s Authentic Party government, which was overthrown by Batista on March 10, 1952.
10. A reference to the victorious battle at El Arroyo del Infierno on January 22, 1957.
11. Ángel Cofiño was a labor leader tied to the interests of whatever government was in power.
12. See Armando Hart’s (*Jacinto*) foreword to this book.
13. Mario Leal was associated with Juan Hernández, a revolutionary assassinated in 1933.
14. A quintal can be 100 base units of either pounds or kilograms.
15. Carlos Iglesias (*Marcos* or *Nicaragua*) was in charge of the action groups in Santiago de Cuba. Marcelo Fernández Font was a member of the July 26 Movement.
16. The US journalists were Robert Taber and Wendell Hoffman of CBS.
17. See the chapter, “A Famous Interview,” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
18. One of those “adventurers” turned out to be one of the most valiant combatants of Che’s troop, Roberto Rodríguez, nicknamed “*el Vaquerito*” (Little Cowboy) because of his small stature. He died fighting during the battle of Santa Clara.
19. Marijuana used to be a subsistence crop for some peasants from the area. The Rebel Army persuaded them to abandon the practice and, in many cases, these peasants became active collaborators with the guerrilla movement.

May 1957

1

Although from early morning I was feeling very well thanks to the ACTH, I was assigned to accompany the young gringo Vic in the rearguard as he had complained that he couldn't walk because of stomach pains; what he has is a mixture of cowardice and homesickness. I even had to carry his backpack. Three soldiers left us: *el Gallego* Morán, Chao (who was discharged with full honors) and a student[1] from Santiago, who has a huge hernia. They left under the command of *el Gallego*, who will then go on to fulfill the missions he's been entrusted with. We arrived at nightfall in the middle of a heavy rainstorm at the home of a couple from Villa Clara, who were new to this area; they received us very well, and we ate and slept in their house.

2

We left early, worried that Guillermo hadn't returned. At noon we stopped to listen to a discussion about national conciliation on the radio; the only real concession offered is to bring forward the date of the elections. At that moment Guillermo arrived, along with Lalo [Sardiñas] and [Enrique] Escalona, as well as a bank employee from Manzanillo, who came to join us and who became indignant when I asked him why he hadn't come with at least $10,000. They also brought the gringo's camera to do a report for *Life*—a camera that had been requested repeatedly without getting an answer—and the news that another North American reporter was on the way. When the gringo [Bob Taber] heard this, he asked that the other reporter be delayed a few days so that he could get an exclusive on the story. Fidel agreed and gave the order to detain the other guy in the home of Rolando, from Villa Clara.

Lalo returned to his warehouse. Guillermo completed his mission by firing some shots in the Sierra Maestra and throwing a few of the old Brazilian grenades; the result was that the force of about 100 men withdrew. Later Molineros, who had taken Mario [Marcos] to Santiago, reached us and he came with another muleteer and his wife, who wanted to meet Fidel; he brought a lot of nylon and some messages and money.

At nightfall we came to a hut where we ate three hens that Molineros had brought. Our people had taken possession of another place and Fidel had given orders to get up at 1:30 a.m., but so that we could sleep a little longer, we allowed them to get up at 3:15. I offered to go and left with that message; I had to take a trail and pass by two others on the left, pass a ranch

and end up at the second one. But unfortunately I couldn’t find the second ranch, and after getting turned around a lot, I lay down to sleep hoping the others would come that way.

3

When I awoke it was already daylight, and at 5:30 with no sign of the men I headed north toward the scrublands. I walked slowly across some almost impenetrable fields of sweet potatoes. I expected to find the men at any moment, but I saw no sign of them. At dusk I went down to a saw mill, where I found two laborers whom I tried to convince I was from the Rural Guard; but they weren’t fooled. I learned that the place was called California and there was a road that connected it to other villages, where there were always some guardsmen stationed. I climbed back up the hill where once again I had to struggle through the sweet potato fields; when night fell I went to sleep right there. I had my first encounter with a wild dog, which fled when I chambered the machine gun.

4

I got up late and in a bad mood. I made my way down through the scrubland with difficulty until I reached the clearing. From there you could see several houses. I kept going down cautiously until I reached one of the houses that turned out to be abandoned. Then I went down to another one where my appearance frightened the people inside, but later they looked after me well, although they had very little. I waited until the afternoon passed and, after eating another little bit, I headed toward another house where they indicated the route I should follow when night fell. I did that but I couldn’t reach the point where I’d become lost by nightfall—which was my intention—because I couldn’t see anything. I slept in the heights of the Sierra Maestra in an abandoned ranch.

5

I went down early but I had to avoid houses. Finally I made it to the side of a road where I waited for several hours in an abandoned ranch house, waiting for nightfall to follow the river up to the house I’d left from the night I got lost. The owner of the hacienda came out to get some food and saw me, so I went to meet him, asking for some food. At first the old man acted like he didn’t know anything, but then he opened up. Two young men happened to pass by on the main road, and one of them called Reinaldo was going to join us. I went along with them and we set out on the road to find

the rest of the group on our own along the main road. The guide told me they had been looking for me all over the area.

At dusk we reached the camp where the second North American reporter [Andrew St. George], who had been detained by the rearguard, was. Everyone welcomed me back with spontaneous applause. When I arrived I found that Bob [Taber] had just left. I was greeted with great affection. They told me that they had eliminated a snitch called Nápoles and set free two others who weren't guilty. Everyone was relaxed and we stayed up talking and cooking until late at night.[2]

6

Before dawn we set out on the main road, but at daylight everyone came out to see us and immediately everyone wanted to join us. We stopped at a little house in a place called La Uvita where I gave medical check-ups to a large number of women and children. Almost all had symptoms of vitamin B deficiency. I prescribed more or less the same thing for everyone and gave some money to a man to buy all the medicine.[3] We left late in the afternoon and stopped at another little house where we slept. Before we left the first house, Fidel promoted Guillermo García as captain and put all the newly incorporated peasants under his command.

7

At dawn we set out with the intention of not being spotted, which was very difficult to achieve as we passed several houses. Finally we encountered some really good people, who showed us a place where we could hunt *jutias* [a small rodent] and Fidel got one. Those people were able to take Haydée out with them, as she was very tired and suffering from asthma. One of the young men from Guillermo's squadron (the photographer) had an attack of malaria and we had to leave him there. We kept walking until almost nightfall, then we rested.

8

We got up late and rested part of the day, resuming our march in the afternoon with terrible news: Nicaragua, the person in charge of bringing us weapons, had been arrested in Havana. We didn't go very far because of the rain and rested quite a distance from our destination.

9

We set out in the early morning and soon reached a zinc-roofed house where we left everything heavy and then set out with almost empty backpacks: a nylon and something to eat. The reporter stayed behind, along

with some sick people. We continued our quick march until we reached a clearing where Mora and Ignacio Pérez went off to explore. In the meantime we captured an army corporal who had come on horseback as liaison with the army platoon that had remained behind. The squadron had passed along the same road two days ago. The two scouts returned with a young man who sympathized with our cause and who gave a good report of the people in this area; according to him, the warehouse we were aiming for was an hour's march away. Earlier we had sent three men to explore the road and announce our arrival; Mora's brother set out on horseback to go there. We crossed some hills and waited for news next to a clearing. The radio announced the arrival of the two young gringos in Guantánamo; they were turned over to the consul in Santiago by the [CBS] journalist Bob [Taber]. At night a man arrived on horseback to tell us there was no news and explained we were a long way from our destination. I took the horse and headed off to the warehouse, a tiring three-hour ride, but less than if I'd gone on foot. The people who were expected at 7:00 didn't show up, and all we could do was to buy some food.

10

At 2:30 we got up, setting out at 3:00, me on horseback. The climb was 600 meters straight up and several kilometers; it was very tiring for the men and took us the whole morning to make the rocky ascent. The people were all excited and came out to meet us, when at around 11:00 we heard some shots, but we could not tell exactly where they came from. Some of our people had gone in that direction and we feared for the fate of Guillermo Domínguez, the photographer. We remained with that uncertainty for several hours until a young man from Manzanillo, Fiallo,[4] came and told us that the skirmish had involved Crescencio's people, that four Guards had showed up and that there was one unidentified person killed. At dusk we set out and found the body of Guillermo Domínguez, naked from the waist up, with a rifle shot in the left elbow, a bayonet wound in the area above the breast and the back of his head was blown off by what appeared to be a 12 gauge shotgun, which was the weapon Guillermo carried. We buried Guillermo right there.

We were able to reconstruct the episode with Crescencio's help: Fiallo had been sent as liaison when, on arriving at a certain spot, he saw some soldiers from behind; immediately he went to warn Crescencio, who gathered all the functional weapons and resolved to attack them, sending

Agustín Lara and one of Mora's nephews to warn us. Meanwhile the soldiers had taken Guillermo prisoner and, assuming that our people were on the other side, climbed up the Sierra Maestra slope and surprised Agustín, shot at him, but both he and [Mora's nephew] escaped. Shortly afterwards the soldiers exchanged fire with Crescencio and then retreated, killing poor Guillermo on the way. The rifles performed very badly, and Ermo was killed when his gun jammed. Crescencio brought 24 men, very poorly armed.

The horse was sacrificed, giving each man a big piece [of meat]. We went to sleep at 3:00 in the morning, absolutely exhausted.

11

We awoke early. While Fidel inspected the camp we saw four individuals who seemed to be snooping around about 500 meters away; I sent someone to advise Fidel to locate those people with a patrol but he didn't pay any attention. Shortly afterwards, while I was distributing all the medicines that had come recently with one of Guillermo's squads, Marciano Oliva arrived with news that all was going well and that the weapons were coming by other means that Luis Peña would explain. But Peña didn't appear; he had gone to the saw mill to return an old man he had as a guide, and no one knows what happened to him. Fidel is reluctant to shoot the prisoner, despite our unanimous desire that he be shot.

The news on the radio is very encouraging: the interview[5] was played on the radio this morning on all the gringo media networks, and on the following Sunday on television. The Santiago court pronounced the sentence against the accused,[6] convicting only 40 of them, with the dissent of the president of the tribunal, who stated that the abnormal conditions were such that those young men were upholding the constitution when they rose up in arms. The prosecutor stated that he had no charges to bring against them and that they were within their rights.

We kept walking but a heavy downpour detained us for two hours; later we reached a clear patch that was hard to get across so we slept there.

12

We spent the whole day waiting in ambush in a clearing above the trail we had made to go to Burro Hill, but nothing happened. In the afternoon Peña, whom we had feared had been taken prisoner, arrived with the news that two are coming from Santiago; Fidel sent out people to look for them and at dusk they arrived: Carlos Paso and a heavyset man called Andrés, who was

very generous and gave me a lighter. They had fresh news about everything that was coming, and we decided on the best way to bring it all. The shipment is now up to 50 weapons. We chatted until late in an abandoned house where we cooked. At 12:00 we left on a short march to the place where we had made camp three or four nights ago. The fat guy gave us a woman's fur coat to make hats out of.

13

This morning the gringo reporter[7] asked me whether or not Fidel wanted to do the interview, and I invented some pretext to excuse him; but the truth is that his behavior is really upsetting; when it was time for the photos he didn't get out of the hammock where he spent his time reading *Bohemia* with an air of offended majesty. Finally he threw out all the people from the general staff. The radio interview has been translated already and all that's needed is to tape it; tonight Fidel was still in a bad mood and he didn't want to tape it, postponing it to the following day. He didn't want to eat with us, complaining about how bad the meal was.

14

Just when it seemed that everything was arranged for the interview, reports came that troops were nearby and we had to move without doing it. We walked a little farther and were hit with a very heavy rainstorm. The journalist was really pissed off and complained bitterly to me about how deceitful we were in putting off the interview; I didn't know how to apologize to him. A man who had been ill with malaria, and whom we had left behind, reached us; he seemed to be having a nervous breakdown and was on the point of tears. He had spent three days wandering around alone after a group of rejects was taken prisoner and they had betrayed him; his story was incoherent and he was quite confused; it was decided to let him go.

We camped by a swollen stream and we ate there. The interview couldn't be done because of the noise of the water, but Fidel promised to do it tomorrow. There was an incident because Beto Samuel, a 15-year-old boy, asked to leave for health reasons, and another man offered to go with him, meaning that he too intended to abandon the struggle. Immediately another 16-year-old kid asked to be released and another big guy said he also wanted to leave because he felt weak. Fidel ordered the detention of the adults and left the young ones free until they could be sent back. We heard that seven of the men who had been sent back had been captured and

that they had told everything they knew. In this case the situation is particularly dangerous because the whole troop knew the way that the weapons are going to be coming. We put up the hammocks in a most unsuitable place, and one of the poor journalist's poles collapsed; when I climbed up to go to sleep a little after 3:00 in the morning I found him rolled up on the dirt with a pole on top of him and with the nylon all ripped; I arranged him as best I could so he could have a peaceful night.

15

We got up early and set out along the stream beside the scrubland, so there was no way we could do the interview. Later we were caught in a heavy storm that detained us for two hours. We kept walking and, as we approached the house where we were finally going to do the taped interview, I was told about a man in Guillermo's squadron who had been badly hurt, and I had to go back to examine him. The man had fallen on his back against a tree trunk and had a probable fracture of his last rib. We carried him with difficulty, but in crossing the Peladero River, I fell behind because I took off my shoes to cross it and, meanwhile, Guillermo and the other guy who was helping [the injured man] walk decided to leave him in a little house without telling me. When I found out I stayed with him to assist him, but the medicines were gone. Acuña's nephew arrived shortly with the order to move to a little house nearby and await orders; but we couldn't do this because it was already night and the trail was very difficult for carrying an injured man. I prepared a meal for the three of us and left Acuña on guard in the first house, staying with the wounded man in the second one, where we slept.

16

It rained during part of the morning and there was no news from the command post. I was about to follow the trail to look for the group when Bruno Acuña appeared with the order from the commander to leave the injured man in a safe house and continue with the rearguard. They sent me the medicines I'd asked for, and I put a cast on the wounded man and then left him in an abandoned house; unfortunately, some neighbors saw him, so I resolved to move him after dark. The command post wasn't too far away, and after walking about a kilometer we reached a farmhouse where the general staff was. We spent the rest of the day there, while I was besieged with medical examinations of the local peasants and our own soldiers. At one point, it was announced that there were soldiers nearby, but it turned

out to be a false alarm caused by the confusion of a peasant who had seen us with the wounded man.

17

We set out in the morning heading south, climbing up a hill and down to a stream where we camped and slept. We got news that the weapons are on the way. One of the Mora brothers deserted, the other two have a certain responsibility; he stayed a little behind with the apparent intention to take a shit and disappeared. Andrew [St. George] still couldn't leave but he's more resigned now.

18

We spent the whole day in the same place, trapped by persistent rain that almost stopped us from cooking. News came of the arrival of 25 guns and 6,000 bullets. The weapons are: 10 Johnsons, 10 bolt-action rifles, three machine guns and two other weapons. Some 10 *arroba* [about 11.5 kilograms] of cow meat came to brighten up our diet and this was immediately consumed. The radio news focuses on [CBS reporter Bob Taber's] film about the Sierra Maestra that will be shown on television tomorrow in the United States. Surprisingly, and when nobody expected it, Andrew left with a guide and all of his things; he will take a yacht to Santiago.

19

The radio was broken so we couldn't hear [Bob Taber's] interview [broadcast] from the United States. The morning passed without any major incidents. In the afternoon one of the two men who wanted to leave escaped and two young men were sent after him; but nothing is known of them yet. Fidel was worried and was thinking about immediately moving camp when the news came that the weapons were already in a truck at the appointed place. There was an anxious moment when we learned that a truck loaded with Rural Guards had come down from the saw mill in the opposite direction, but they were just going to the beach. Twenty-five men were sent and they returned at dawn bringing the precious cargo of three tripods, three Maxim machine guns, nine M-1s and 10 Johnson rifles, plus 6,000 bullets. The only inconvenience is the lack of ammunition for the M-1, which only shoots up to 45 shots per carbine. In general, these [weapons] will be distributed as follows: one M-1 for Ramirito, two for the vanguard, two for the rearguard, and four for taking care of the two tripods. The Johnson still doesn't have a destination; the Maxims will go to Jorge, Almeida and one

for the general staff, which I will probably handle; Raúl, Guillermo and Crescencio will get the tripods.[8]

Notebook IV

20

At dusk we got out of our hammocks and slowly began the climb up the mountain in the direction of another little house, which was in a good place to wait for the truck. Before we left, the weapons had been distributed more or less as expected. The man who had been sent to pursue the fugitive arrived, informing us that he had headed toward the coast and taken a boat to Santiago, probably to inform the government of everything. It was already night when we reached the new camp, installing ourselves for the night in a little ranch belonging to some workers. A new mini-squadron of four men was formed to carry the machine gun that I'm going to use; the men are Pupo, Beatón,[9] Oñate[10] and a kid who recently joined called Joel.[11] This kid had come with two others to join us without any advance contact; two were accepted and the third one was rejected.

21

The day passed without any major incidents. In the afternoon Dionisio arrived with messages and another of Crescencio's sons. It was decided to release two more: one of Crescencio's men, who had a real hernia, and one of Guillermo's men with stomach pain, which may or may not be real. At night, taking advantage of a trip the men were making to get supplies, I went to see Enrique López's little girl. He's an old friend of Fidel's, who is the administrator or foreman of the Babún Company. They welcomed us magnificently and invited us to a large and plentiful meal seasoned by a woman's hand. We arrived back at the camp at midnight and distributed the provisions by squads.

22

In the morning we all headed for some high ground overlooking a road to set up an ambush. We spent most of the day there. Before that I had to treat a huge man called Muñoz, from René's squadron, who is a real coward; he had been hit in the arm and used this to ask permission to leave. At noon Enrique appeared at the ambush site, giving us information about the supplies that are coming. We decided to visit the *batey*,[12] and we headed that way. It was still daylight; we had to take a kid prisoner, as he was too talkative but claimed to be our friend.

At dusk we reached the hamlet where Jorge [Sotús] was, having arrived by another route to bring us letters from the movement people in Santiago. Among them was a report from René [Ramos Latour] announcing the arriving of new weapons and another from David [Frank País], which was very clear in terms of revolutionary tactics he proposed, and also saying that more things were on their way, including several 61 mm. mortars. In the hamlet we proceeded to visit all the little shacks, and then we ate a sumptuous roast pork dinner with rice. At about midnight, a truck came loaded with supplies for the warehouse of the hamlet, but they gave some things to us. We slept in Enrique's house.

23

We got up at dawn and we went by truck to the camp. All the provisions were handed out there, and in the afternoon an enormous bull was brought and killed. Twenty-two *arrobas* of meat were handed out among the hungry troops, who ate like lions. To do a bit of house cleaning, everyone who wanted to leave was permitted to do so; one of those who responded was the big guy with his hand in a cast, along with two of Crescencio's men and almost all of Efigenio's [Reyes] squadron from Guillermo's platoon, including [Efigenio himself]. Only one remained from that bunch.[13] After Fidel spoke harshly to them, some wanted to take back their decision, but that was not allowed. In all, nine left, leaving a total of 127, almost all armed now. The man with the broken rib has already rejoined us, and he seems to be okay. What's curious is that one of those who had tried to leave before and was detained for that reason now doesn't want to go and is content to be in Nano's squadron.

24

With the enormous weight resulting from [eating] the bull we set out on our march up the slope, which brought on my asthma. We climbed to 1,625 meters, and on the other side, on the road, we set up an ambush. I went with the bipod[14] to set up on the road itself, in a good position to sweep the column, but not at all enviable in terms of a place to hide if someone should come along, which is what occurred. So when a peasant spotted us, we had to detain him. In the end he turned out to be the brother-in-law of Enrique [López], so no blood was shed. No Guards passed by there, and at dusk we went to set up camp by a stream that was very cold and most uncomfortable.

25

We spent the day there with nothing new happening, except that the radio announced a rebel landing in the Mayarí region.[15] According to the radio, of the 27 who landed, five were already captured; it seems to be Trujillo's group. At night a man from the vanguard ran away; he had a stomach problem and seemed to be a coward. There isn't much possibility that he's a snitch. Lalo came and left.

26

We began the trek without hurrying. When we arrived at the ambush site from a few days ago, one of the temporary men reached us, bringing a prisoner who, according to reports, is a policeman in disguise. Nothing conclusive came out of the interrogation; he claims to be a Fidelista and wants to join us. We spent the whole day waiting in ambush and during that time a discussion erupted with Fidel: I said that we couldn't lose the opportunity to catch 50 or 60 Guards in an ambush, and he said that we should only attack a barracks because of the moral impact that would have.[16] At first we had thought to attack El Uvero, which has 60 soldiers.

In the afternoon an overweight rancher from the area turned up to offer us *malanga* and cattle. He came with [Hermes] Cardero, the son-in-law of the administrator of the Babún Company in El Uvero. Fidel made an appointment with the man for noon tomorrow. We learned from Enrique that there were three Guards disguised in the hamlet and we sent three men there. We moved to a new place, facing a rest stop on the side road. We were waiting there for food and cigarettes when, instead of these, Enrique came again to warn us that one of the Guards had left and there were suspicious noises heard near the hamlet. Fidel suspected that [Major] Casillas was nearby and ordered 80 men to advance toward the place, while two other men would try to capture the guardsmen. We took our positions when we were told that everything was quiet and that the [Rural Guard] spies had been captured. The prisoners arrived soon, one white and one black; the white one was crying his heart out. They confessed to having orders from Casillas to wander around checking things out. Their cowardice evoked repugnance rather than pity.

27

The jeep with the food arrived early and 10 of the officers met to receive instructions. They were only told to have all the men and weapons ready for battle because there would be fighting in the next 48 hours. The order was given to cook from 12:00 to 1:30. During this interval they brought in a guy

called Pinto, who was suspected of being a snitch but who wasn't one, however, and he was set free. A grave was dug for the two Guard snitches and the order to execute them was carried out by the rearguard.

We walked slowly through the scrublands until nightfall, at which time we started out along the road. Fidel had ordered that the administrator's wife and children leave, but we found out later she refused to go. We were marching at top speed toward the beach when a jeep came in the opposite direction and we hid. One of the rearguard (Barrera) was spotted by the driver (Cardero), but he was allowed to pass without being asked who he was. When Fidel found out he had a fit and detained the man from the rearguard. However, it was nothing more than a scare, and in a while we saw the jeep returning. That's when we learned what happened to Cardero, who had the task of moving the wife of Lalo (the administrator), our good friend.

It was decided to go ahead with the attack despite everything. When we drew near, the men were distributed and given final plans to attack before dawn. The orders included taking the guard posts and advancing on the barracks to shower it with bullets. The plan for the battle area was:

I Guard Posts
II *Batey* [hamlet]
III Barracks
IV Babún Company Installations
1 general staff
2 Raúl's platoon

3 Almeida’s platoon
4 and 5 Jorge and Guillermo’s platoons
6 and 7 Vanguard and Rearguard
8 Crescencio’s platoon
9 Me with the Madsen machine gun.

28

When it became light, we made the unhappy discovery that we couldn’t see the barracks. Some groups, like Camilo’s, took the wrong direction and another, Jorge [Sotús], was given incorrect information and his group didn’t dominate the barracks as planned. My position enabled me to shoot at the barracks from some 500 meters. As soon as Fidel’s shot gave the order to fire, the rapid fire of machine guns was heard. The garrison responded to our fire with great effectiveness as I learned later. Almeida’s men advanced courageously, inspired by his fearless example. I saw Camilo advance with his hat adorned with the July 26 bandana. I advanced from the left with two assistants carrying the munitions and Beatón with the machine gun.

Shortly we were joined by the disabled man from Pilón[17] (from Crescencio’s platoon), Mario Leal (from the rearguard) and old man Acuña (from Raúl’s platoon). We continued to advance and the two who ran toward the hamlet escaped the action of my Madsen. The battle continued but we kept tightening the circle. When there were no more bushes left for us to crawl behind, old man Leal fell near me and I went to give him first aid; he had a flesh wound on his head but the bullet also had entered the brain mass at the level of the left parietal convolution and he couldn’t move his right hand. I helped him breathe, bandaged the wound and turned him over to Joel, while I attended to the machine gun. Almost immediately, however, the garrison and the guard posts surrendered. The soldier who had wounded Leal and old man Acuña surrendered 15 meters in front of me. He led me to the infirmary where the [army] doctor and his assistant were holed up, but they too surrendered as prisoners. I started gathering supplies and collected two prisoners. Immediately the wounded began to arrive and we gave them first aid. Leal was in bad shape; Cilleros [Silleros Marrero] had a wound in his arm, which was fractured, and another bullet had passed through his right lung and was lodged in his spinal column; he was dying.

The battle had developed this way: When the shot was fired and the machine-gun bursts began, we heard everyone advance except the general staff. Julito [Díaz] took cover behind a tree trunk, but he was hit in the eye

and died shortly afterwards. The old man Eligio Mendoza (the guide) rushed to fight with the little gun he had been given and received a shot in the gut, dying after a while. Jorge advanced at the head of his platoon but was pushed back and had to jump into the water to save his life. *El Policía* [Francisco Soto Hernández, "the Policeman"] came after, and they killed him. As they advanced [Miguel Ángel] Manals was wounded in the lung and Quique in the arm, hand and right buttock. Anselmo Vega, from Guillermo's platoon, went in too close and was shot down, dead. Luis Crespo came from the general staff to help and succeeded in eliminating the guard post, which was putting up almost no resistance. Three men stayed in place, the fourth fled and was shot dead on the beach. Almeida advanced on the post with his group and killed three; but one remained and caused a lot of damage, provoking alarm because our men believed that they were being attacked by their own compañeros.

In rapid succession Silleros, [Mario] Maceo and Hermes [Leyva], a kid from Santiago who was Pantoja's machine-gun assistant, were all wounded, and Almeida himself was hit in the arm and right leg. [Gustavo] Moll was killed in the same place. Raúl divided his platoon, and Nano [Díaz] was sent below with the machine gun. He almost reached the barracks with his tripod and then, abandoning it, he advanced with his pistol.

At that moment a burst from our machine gun provoked a reply from the soldiers in the barracks, and Nano was killed by a shot to the head. Acuña was with us and, when he went to help Leal, he was wounded in the right hand and arm; he crawled out of the line of fire, and when he found Almeida wounded he carried him to the rearguard. Crescencio's platoon engaged in almost no action because their machine gun didn't work; it was situated in the best position to attack the barracks. When they surrendered, [Victor] Mora and Vitalio [Torres] from the vanguard wore down the soldier who was still fighting us. We took him prisoner and went to capture the doctor and his assistant; we then left them in charge of the wounded and I proceeded to check the hamlet and found two more guardsmen. There were 19 wounded and 12 dead, plus 14 prisoners. There were 51 in the barracks, excluding the medical staff, so six Guards must have escaped.

What was amazing in that long battle that lasted two and three-quarter hours was that not one civilian was wounded. We took our wounded with us, except for Leal and Silleros, who were left in the care of the doctor who took responsibility for their lives. I thought our wounded would be taken to

the nearby place where we had left the backpacks; but when I went there to dress their wounds, I found they weren't there, and there was no vehicle to go in. After a while the trucks that were coming higher up arrived and we spent three long hours near the hamlet without finding anyone. Eventually we had to enter the hamlet so that Enrique [López] could drive us to the place where the commander and the other groups were. At dusk I could finally attend to the wounded and get some sleep, which was my great desire.[18]

29

Planes started flying over us very early, prompting our immediate departure; the wounded remained in my care. Those of us who remained were: Almeida, Peña, Quique, Manals, Acuña, Hermes Leyva and Maceo (all wounded) and Acuña's nephew, Sinecio Torres (as guide), my two machine-gun aids and me, with the weapons. Enrique had to look for us in a truck, as they had left a good portion of the weapons and items taken from the soldiers. Nevertheless, one of Enrique's messengers came to say that he couldn't come because his daughter was sick and he had to take her to Santiago. Because of this, we had to improvise a stretcher out of a hammock and move in the first stage to a ranch, overrun with chickens, where we ate well and spent the night. All the wounded did well, except Quique whose wounds were infected and Manals, whose wound in the lung is more dangerous. We have absolutely no news of the outside world.[19]

30

It had been agreed that six volunteers would come to carry in the hammocks those who couldn't walk through the scrublands; but we heard a series of Garand rifle shots and nobody came. So we had to proceed with Sinecio and my two assistants, taking everything possible with us. We had to leave behind Crescencio's machine-gun tripod and other weapons in bad shape, conveniently hidden, the same with helmets and other stuff. The journey wasn't long but the wounded were quite weak and it took almost the whole afternoon, leaving some things behind hidden. We reached a little ranch house made of guano, inhabited by a former merchant from Palma Soriano and his wife and brother-in-law, where we spent the night, even occupying the couple's bed.

31

Sinecio and Alejandro left early to go on an "errand" and to get everything ready for our departure. Acuña and Joel went to get the things we had left

behind, but Joel returned in a little while to warn us that they had seen strange people on the slope. I took the machine gun and we approached cautiously until we cut them off. They turned out to be the prisoners Fidel had freed and they showed us the notes that they had been given in case they bumped into some patrol. The incident had a very good result because they were amazed at our effectiveness in the mountains. There was an old corporal who was almost crying from hunger and fatigue. We left them in the house where we had slept, and we departed, uneasy knowing that they now knew our trail.

In the afternoon *el Chino* [the Chinaman] Mora came. He had been one of the occupants of the first ranch house we had come upon in the region; he was shitting bricks after having been detained by the Rural Guards. We decided against the plan to send a guide to Manzanillo because almost everyone was afraid.

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1. José Lupiáñez returned to the guerrilla group after an operation.
2. See the chapter, “On the March,” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
3. Che recalled that he overheard a little girl, who had been observing these medical consultations, say to her mother, “Mama, this doctor says the same thing to everyone!” See the chapter “On the March,” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
4. Ramón Quintiliano Fiallo Barrero (*Fiallito*).
5. Taber’s interview with Fidel Castro for CBS television.
6. This was the trial of the *Granma* expeditionaries who had been captured and others charged over the events of November 30, which included Frank País. See the chapter “The Weapons Arrive” in Che’s *Reminiscences.*…
7. Andrew St. George is described by Che as an FBI agent. See “The Weapons Arrive” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…
8. At the end of notebook III of this diary, Che wrote: “Andrew St. George, 104 Pearsdale Drive Apt 1/c Mount Vermont, NY. Tel 11MOmo4-7430.”
9. Pupo and Manolo Beatón were shot after the revolution for assassinating combatant Cristino Naranjo.
10. Alejandro Oñate Cañete (*Cantinflas*).
11. Joel Iglesias subsequently fought in Columns One and Four and then with Che in Column Eight in the campaign in Las Villas.
12. Translator’s note: A *batey* is a very small rural hamlet, usually a cluster of small houses near a sugar mill.

13. This was Salustiano de la Cruz (*Crucito*), whom Che considered to be "one of the most loved combatants."
14. Translator's note: Che refers to two kinds of machine guns they had at that time, one mounted on a tripod and another he refers to as the "bipod," meaning it rested on two rather than three legs.
15. This was the ill-fated landing of the *Corynthia*, organized by the Authentic Party, led by ex-president Carlos Prío. Virtually all the expeditionaries were brutally assassinated.
16. In the chapter "The Weapons Arrive" in his *Reminiscences…*, Che writes, "Today, several years after that discussion, in which I was not convinced at the time, I must recognize that Fidel's judgment was correct."
17. A man crippled in one leg, known as "*Bomba*."
18. See the chapter, "The Battle of El Uvero" in Che's *Reminiscences*…
19. See the chapter, "Caring for the Wounded" in Che's *Reminiscences*...

June 1957

1

We decided to move to the woods, about 200 meters away from the little house, to await the arrival of Sinecio.[1] At about 1:00 in the afternoon the owner of the house told us he was going with his wife to look for some chickens at the house where we had left the guardsmen. At 3:00 Sinecio arrived with three new recruits: Feliciano, an old chatterbox; Banderas,[2] a *moreno*,[3] who didn't seem like a bad guy; and Israel,[4] who seems the best of all, quiet and energetic. They left with the wounded to spend the night in a little hut near Papo's house beside the Peladero River, and Sinecio and I waited until 6:10 for the owners of the house to return with the chickens. We had to leave at that time without being able to take our things as night would be upon us on the way, and that was very bad. We arrived after the others had already cooked the first pot of food.

2

Today, the sixth month since our landing in Cuba, started out rainy. We began our march very slowly, with me at the rear accompanying Almeida, who was dragging himself along. When we came to a rough patch, Almeida's pain increased and we had to wait there while Israel cut a swath through the undergrowth so that we could save time going that way. When we began our march again, Israel returned with food, which reanimated Almeida; we carried him for a while in a hammock until we reached a place where that was impossible. He continued dragging himself along until we were hit by another rainstorm that held us up until 5:00, just a few meters from the house. We had taken 12 hours to cover a distance no greater than a league, but that night we were able to sleep peacefully under a roof, although somewhat cramped, in Israel's house.

3

In the morning Israel's family went down to a house below that belonged to his father. He has been our best collaborator so far. We went with Sinecio to take some corn cobs to a house nearby. It's completely abandoned. Communication with Santiago is becoming urgent, so Sinecio was sent to get 20 pesos from the other Israel and the backpacks we left. They didn't return all day. The only supplies that arrived, as an advance, was some cheese—the only event of the day.

4

Sinecio and the compañero arrived early; they had brought the backpacks and the pot but they couldn't get the money because the man hadn't shown up all day. We immediately prepared everything for Manals' departure as he was already doing pretty well. Sinecio himself left with the family of Feliciano, for whom the prospect of a trip to Santiago chilled all his revolutionary enthusiasm, and so he went with them. I ordered payment for the pigs and hens that he had bought in Santiago for a good price. Sinecio's mission is to take Manals to Santiago and come back immediately to take Quique on the most viable route. All the wounded are getting better, even Quique, who is the most delicate of all of them. Israel came to say that there's a cow for us on the beach, but we have to go and get it.

5

Nothing new, waiting for supplies that didn't arrive. Maceo has now recovered. No news from Fidel.

6

We went with Banderas and my two assistants to his farm to look for food, but on the way we ran into Israel, who was bringing supplies, and he advised us that the cow was ready below, and that we had to get it soon. We delayed a long time with the food and Israel went ahead with Acuña and Hermes, who was also judged as "fit" today. Banderas and my two assistants left afterwards, but well behind the others and not at all happy. They didn't return all night. Israel brought the disturbing news that Celia Sánchez was taken prisoner. If that's true, my diary is also a prisoner.

7

The carriers arrived in the morning; the delay by Banderas and the young guys meant that they missed each other and they had to carry the whole load by themselves. I spoke to Banderas and asked him where he stood; if he was going to continue with the movement he would have to subject himself to the discipline and, if not, that he would be considered just a collaborator and sympathizer. He said that he would continue with us. Nothing important happened during the day.

8

They told me to go to a house below that belonged to a brother of Manuel Rodríguez to talk about a few matters. I went with Alejandro and I learned there that all the supplies had been brought up already. I consulted with Israel and figured out what was missing; I brought the man up and they took an inventory, showing that, even at inflated prices the bill scarcely

reached 50 pesos and they had been given 70; so at least 20 pesos were missing. He said he'd return to the beach himself. I threatened that no one would be allowed to join the movement until the matter of the missing 20 pesos was cleared up.

The contact with Manuel served to clarify the situation with Celia; the news was that there'd been a battle in Peladero where she had died. As there had been no battle, there can be no problem. Manuel agreed to be back the day after tomorrow. There's no news of Fidel and Sinecio hasn't returned. What's more, it is said that photos were taken of two corpses in El Uvero: one was Eligio, the other unknown. The question is whether he is the man we're missing, nicknamed Niquero, because that's where he's from.

9

The day passed with nothing new, the wounded continue to improve. Israel has already said that he was more useful here, having this as a backup, etc.

10

Manuel Acuña decided that his bullet wound was bothering him a lot and in a moment of courage he resolved to have it operated on. I made a very small incision but I didn't find the bullet.

11

Manolo Rodríguez arrived with the purchases, but he didn't bring everything, holding onto the rest below, and asked me to speak with him; I will go tomorrow. It was decided that Acuña and Banderas would go to the home of the other Israel to ask him for money. Banderas objected immediately and only agreed to go most unwillingly. According to Evelio, the new recruit who is in quarantine, the radio announced that government troops had surprised one of our patrols, taking prisoner Hermes Cardero and someone else.

12

I went down to talk with Manolo; he was just waiting for me to talk with D.[5] D. is an individual from the old Authentic [party] group, a Catholic and a racist, with a servile attitude toward his boss, who is only concerned with electoral matters and to save for his master all the misappropriated lands in this region. I also suspect that he has participated in the evictions of peasants. But leaving that aside, he's a good informant and is determined to help. I agreed to send him a list of the items we need brought from Santiago, where he is planning to go in a few days; he promised us a

kerosene stove, which is extremely useful in the woods. The conversation lasted three hours and the man jumped from one topic to another with a marvelous versatility, but from what he said, what's clear is: the news of the death or imprisonment of Celia Sánchez is false; that of Hermes Cardero must be false because he's said to be a prisoner in Pilón, along with Jesús Acuña, Vilo's father.

I went to visit the families of Mora, Rodríguez and Israel; I arrived at nightfall with some asthma. We went to sleep early, and at 3:00 in the morning Israel arrived accompanying D. He came with some urgency because he was going to Santiago; he had already brought the stove and a couple of pipes for Almeida and me. He took the list of items we needed and promised to be back with some reading material and everything else within a week.

13

We had to find a cave to hide in because so much time in the same place was already dangerous; but I had to wait until 12:00 to leave because I had a lot of asthma, probably due to the tobacco because I had hit the pipe pretty hard. We found some caves but Juan's relatives saw us and I don't trust him a lot. We have had to search for clarin flowers for my asthma. When I returned I found that Sinecio had returned without any news, but bringing a good quantity of supplies and tobacco. He came with instructions for Quique and established tomorrow morning for his departure. He brought 100 pesos and a good pair of boots that they sent me from Santiago. I injected myself with ACTH again.

14

In the morning Sinecio left with Quique and Proenza heading toward Yao, and later they will go on to Santiago. During the day we moved because Israel's family is now coming, as his father arrived from Santiago. When Maceo and I were ready to go, Feliciano appeared with his wife, chattering up a storm and praising me to the skies because I brought them a little medicine. He expressed his firm decision to continue with us; I agreed on the condition that he took his wife somewhere else and return within three days. Israel's father gave us some salt and tomorrow we'll kill and salt another cow. Due to Feliciano's arrival, Maceo and I decided to stay in order to avoid showing him how close the cave is to the house.

15

In the morning Feliciano told me about five pesos Sinecio had spent on cognac. I didn't know anything about this story and how it involved Alejandro, who was one of those who drank it. It seems that Juan, the jerk who lives next door, got drunk on the cognac, which was bought in the name of the movement, on credit from a store. Feliciano asked me about our people and I told him that when he returned from leaving his wife in Santiago, or wherever, I would show him the cave. But in a moment of carelessness, he found it. On the way back, I cursed him soundly and sent him down quickly. Israel said that someone had to go down to look for the cow; Banderas, Evelio, Alejandro, Hermes and Acuña (the son)[6] went, leaving at about 4:00 in the afternoon, and didn't return all night.

16

In the morning the first of those who undertook the expedition to get the cow showed up. The endeavor had been difficult because the cow was huge and the river was high so it was hard to cross. The hero was Banderas. In the morning, Juan, from whom we had been hiding, appeared; the man smelled the meat and came looking for it. The cave where we are is very humid because the water slides down the rocks and drips on us continuously.

17

The morning passed peacefully, without any special events; but this afternoon Sinecio came with 11 armed men. After giving Sinecio hell for his previous drunken episode and for bringing people without weapons… [sentence incomplete]. A 56-year-old man was rejected because of his age, the others were accepted, despite not bringing even a pair of shoes like civilized folk. The newcomers include nine from Bayamo, one from Santiago and one from Veguita, who was already with Fidel. Israel left with Banderas, Joel and Evelio to bring the rest of the supplies David sent and they returned at night. I ordered another cow for the new men, which they'll have to get tomorrow and we also have to collect the weapons that were left in the Babún Company's wood.

18

It had been decided that we would leave early, but Sinecio convinced me that it would be better to leave at 3:00 in the afternoon to reach the house where the chickens were; so that's what we did. Eleven men left with me and seven went to get the cow. When we crossed the hill we entered the little valley of Arroyo del Indio where the army's hand was evident in the

number of burnt-out houses. We climbed up a long slope to reach the campsite near the chicken coop the soldiers had used. We issued final instructions in case of shots and marched in absolute silence in the pitch darkness. When we were near the zinc house where we had camped previously, we heard a very faint shot. We all dropped to the ground, but when I checked it turned out that Alejandro had fired a shot but had not let us know. After bawling him out, we went on to where the weapons were buried, finding the place intact. We distributed the weapons and returned without incident to the chicken coop, now totally destroyed by the Rural Guards. We slept there until dawn, taking turns doing guard duty.

19

At daybreak we began the return trek with the heavy tripod machine gun and, after a pause to eat sugarcane in one of the burnt-out houses, we reached the camp. The men who had gone to get the cow arrived later. Juan, the jerk of a neighbor, arrived first with a little piece of meat for everyone. The man from Yara hadn't arrived yet with one of the kids, and it was decided that Sinecio would leave for Bayamo tomorrow with one of the people from Bayamo to look for equipment for the group. The day passed with nothing new.

20

As the day began Sinecio left with Enrique Chadman, one of the new men from Bayamo. At mid-morning David arrived from below. He came with a bunch of shoes, chocolate, medicines and cigarettes. He didn't bring any messages and some of the requested items were missing; but he said they would come within a few days. We sent 10 men below to look for the things. There was nothing else new all day except for the arrival of Israel's father, who asked me not to take his son with us; I told him I couldn't interfere with his son's freely expressed decision, and things stayed like that, still friendly.

21

This morning the old man [Pancho] Tamayo came with news that two new recruits were coming: Francisco Rodríguez Tamayo and William Rodríguez Viamonte, the latter from Bayamo, the other one from Media Luna. The first one brought a Stand 22 automatic pistol, which he exchanged with Joel for a Springfield. They brought hardly any equipment. They got here because they had encountered Sinecio and he indicated the way. We sent a message to Santiago with David advising them that we will be heading off

again on the 24th of this month and asking them not to send any unarmed men. Another group went out to see what they could find, which will probably be the last food we'll eat in this area for now. The army has grown to: five wounded (already recovered), five healthy men accompanying the wounded, 10 men from Bayamo, two more recently incorporated and four men from this zone—a total of 26, but deficient in terms of weapons.

22

Nothing new all day except for a strange illness that struck down Maceo making him vomit. This meant the cooking was left to Vilo Acuña and one of the new guys, René Cuervo, who seems willing.

23

The day was full of small events. The boat we were waiting for didn't arrive and we received a message from David advising us to leave the area because there were indications of a serious betrayal, and suggesting the business with the boat had a bad smell about it; he said he was sending [another] man to join us. This was the *jabao*,[7] Nicolás Roy, the brother of [Pupo and Manolo] Beatóns' mother; he looked a lot like them, and even had Manolo's mannerisms. The man seems willing. Earlier we had an unexpected visitor in the person of Toto Díaz, the Beatóns' buddy, who learned of our unexpected stopping place from old man Tamayo; he came to bring us a new person, this time from the Contramaestre region, whose name is Antonio Candel; he's a sharp guy.

Just when we had everything ready to leave the following day, well into the night, another note came from David, saying that the boat had arrived without any problems and that he would send some things tomorrow. We had already formed the squads for the march, giving Vilo responsibility for the vanguard and five men under his command; next would come my squadron, which included Almeida and my two veteran assistants, two from Bayamo in charge of the .30 machine gun (without bullets or a stand), Pedro Pompa and Clemente "*Chicho*" and two new men; then Pena, with six more and, closing up the ranks, Maceo, with another six. There were 28 of us.

24

We were getting everything ready when Sinecio arrived to say that others were coming: the envoy Enrique, plus Evelio Saborit, who had just joined us because he could no longer remain in Bayamo—also without weapons. Fortunately there was a shipment of uniforms, blankets and other supplies

that made it a less embarrassing situation for the men from Bayamo. The shipment they brought was so large that they couldn’t carry it all, and we had to send more people to go and get it. We left before it all arrived, leaving equipment to pick up tomorrow because we couldn’t take it all.

We arrived at dusk at the Peladero River, with enough time to get comfortably settled into a group of caves along the river bank. At night the stragglers arrived; our path was strewn with equipment that we couldn’t collect because of the excess load. It became an urgent matter to look for a cave where we could leave some of the supplies. A man from below arrived with the mules claiming he knew Almeida because they had been prisoners together in El Vivac, after the July 26 attack [on the Moncada barracks]; he couldn’t climb because he had a leg that had been injured when the mule fell on top of him. I sent someone to look for David.

25

The two pipes that had been so confidently promised didn’t appear, along with two lighters and some other things whose fate is uncertain. The morning was spent doing organizational tasks and reading *Bohemia* magazine. Old man Tamayo came with medicine and some canned food, his son and two helpers, one of whom wanted to stay with us, but he was rejected because he had no weapon. One of the young guys from Bayamo showed the first, unmistakable signs of cowardice; we will send him back to Bayamo to the head of the movement there. At night a message came from David to say that he was in Israel’s house and I went there to talk with him and establish the most recent contacts. I arrived late at the camp with an invitation for Almeida to go and talk to Pardo Llada.

26

I stayed in camp while Almeida, Pena and Acuña went to the appointment. In the morning I made my debut as a tooth-puller, pulling one from Israel, but when I tried to do the same with Joel the tooth broke four times, and as I didn’t have an appropriate scalpel or [anything else suitable], I had to leave it the way it was. Near nightfall Almeida arrived with a new recruit: Vitalino Ramos, the brother of the mother of the sons of old man Mendoza; apparently another one is coming tomorrow, sent by David from the beach.

27

We had thought to leave today but later we postponed the trip until tomorrow and, meanwhile, get some jerky and some packages that are in old man Israel’s house. He came to say goodbye because he’s going to

Santiago and won’t see us again, at least for now. In the afternoon, four volunteers presented themselves to us, three of them armed and one who had left his shotgun in the home of a peasant friend. We already knew the chief, a guy called Yiyo from a saw mill near Pino del Agua; one of the others was his cousin and the others were unknown to us, one black and one white whom Yiyo knew from his neighborhood. The black guy brought a Springfield and 190 bullets; his name is Félix Mendoza, and that weapon, plus another like it, would [most likely] end up being captured by the soldiers along with their owner. The [new] men were divided up, one to each squadron, with the army now made up of 36 terrible soldiers. Toto [Tuto Almeida] was told that tomorrow we were going to ask him for a quintal of food that he promised to obtain.

28

We began the march slowly, well into the morning, after Israel and Banderas came with the last packages. Before that I shot some film that I wanted to make into a documentary about a fake prisoner, but it should turn out ridiculous. The march proceeded very slowly because Almeida needed to stop frequently. We reached the new camp by mid-afternoon. There the issue of men wanting to leave came up, and Walfrido, who was already a deserter, was joined by one of his compañeros, Rolando, and one of those who arrived yesterday and who was already feeling homesick. So the troop was reduced to 33 men. On a curious note, the three deserters were all from Pena’s squadron.

29

We decided to stay until the day after tomorrow to listen [on the radio] to the mass meeting in Santiago and to see if anything occurred there. In the afternoon two new volunteers showed up wanting to join. At first Almeida didn’t want to consider them, but the men came from Guantánamo and had been walking for 11 days, so we had to accept them. They were brought to us by Alfonso, one of those who had helped us when the whole troop was together and came here sent by Porfirio Sánchez, a neighbor. Cherry bombs keep exploding.

30

Two more arrived early, which brings the number to 35 men. Eduardo Tamayo Trujillo and Roberto Viera Estrada are from Guantánamo; [Eduardo] has a cloudy eye and is incorporated into the troop (but apart from that fact I don’t recall much about him). We couldn’t listen to the

meeting in Santiago because the radio didn't work; there was too much static. We decided to leave early tomorrow. Acuña became ill at night with chills and a cold sweat; I gave him a cup of rum and hot coffee. He improved slightly and seemed to sleep.

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1. The chapter, "Return Journey" in Che's *Reminiscences*… describes everything that happened in the month of June 1957.
2. Teodoro Banderas Maceo, who later died in combat.
3. Translator's note: The terms *moreno* and *mulato* [mulatto] are often used interchangeably in Cuba.
4. Israel Pardo, whom Che described as "the best of a family of fighters."
5. A reference to David Gómez Pliego, an effective collaborator, despite his political affiliation and his unconditional ties to his boss. In the chapter "Caring for the Wounded," in his *Reminiscences*…, Che explains why he thinks Gómez supported the revolution.
6. Juan Vitalio Acuña (*Vilo*) was Jesús Acuña's son, and would eventually hold the position of commander. Major was the highest military position in the Rebel Army. He adopted the *nom de guerre* "Joaquín" when he participated in Che's guerrilla group in Bolivia. He died in an ambush in Vado de Puerto Mauricio, Bolivia, on August 31, 1967.
7. Translator's note: *Jabao* is a Cuban term referring to a light-skinned mulatto with kinky hair.

July 1957

1

I awoke with asthma so I took advantage of Acuña's illness to stay in my hammock all day. The news we heard was very interesting: throughout the island there's been an unparalleled wave of violence; in Camagüey the police were patrolling the streets; in Guantánamo various tobacco farms had been set on fire and there was an attempt to burn down the warehouses of a North American sugar company. In Santiago itself two Guards were killed and a colonel was wounded. Our casualties have been four men, among them Frank País's brother called José [Josué].[1] It was already determined that the trip will be tomorrow morning.

2

The dawn of our seventh month in Cuba began with the news that Feliciano, "*Polilla*," the man who claimed he had carried Raúl, deserted the troop, taking a knife with him. In addition, Argelio Díaz didn't appear; according to his brother, he was working with his uncle, but it seems to me that he went with Feliciano. Tuto took us up to the stern of the troops and we followed slowly to the top of La Botella. The guys were overloaded and two of our men (Clemente and Candel) gave signs of feeling the strain; but the surprise was that right there Vitalino, the brother of Eligio's sons, said he'd had enough, and he was let go immediately.

Later we met a peasant who had come looking for us to tell us that there were two men from Havana looking for us. That same peasant took us to the house of someone called Benito Mora, who had put up Yiyo and other compañeros. We sent messengers to find certain contacts and slept in a creek bed. In setting up camp we learned that Chicho [Fernández] and Candel were leaving because they couldn't take this life [of a guerrilla] any longer. The *jabao* had a rash and he went, too. Thus our squadron was reduced from 11 to seven members. We agreed that the next day we will harangue the whole troop to see who wants to leave from the other squads. The five desertions reduced the troop to 30 men.

3

In the morning we climbed up to a small wood that overlooks Benito's [Mora's] house, and from there we sent Sinecio and González, one of the new recruits, to look for the men from Havana. The whole troop was addressed and told it was their last chance, and everyone was urged to make a decision. Two of the Maceos left and the troop was left with 28 men.

Later the two from Havana arrived, Gilberto [Capote] and Nicolás, accompanied by one from Bayamo, Aristides Guerra,[2] the latter with a long arm, the others with revolvers. The men from Havana are ex-military, who had been discharged with the rank of sergeant and who, according to them, are instructors. To me they seem like a pair of shit-eaters who are trying to ingratiate themselves. We decided to continue the voyage by the river below to the house of a guy called Polo.[3] His brother, who took us there, wanted to join up but was rejected because he didn't have a weapon. After walking a stretch we reached a coffee plantation where we slept.

4

Polo's brother-in-law, who didn't know of our presence, was surprised this morning when he came down from his house. After the appropriate explanations we let him go. When Almeida went to inspect some caves where we could spend the day, one of the sergeants who was giving a class to the young guys fired a shot that almost killed Joel. At first it seemed to me that he might have been a snitch alerting the army, but I don't think so because it would have taken a great actor to simulate the surprise and consternation on that man's face. He's the youngest and is called Nicolás. The shot forced us to move camp immediately.

We prepared pork fricassee while we rested among the rocks near Polo's house. Polo was told that two unknown men were looking for him, seeking work. It turned out to be Manolito and Enrique, Fidel's friend, who had come to join up. He brought some magazines and news from Santiago. Manolito already has connections to bring 50 armed people from Santiago. This afternoon we began the march down along the Zorzal River; it's a really bad trail and we were caught in a torrential rainstorm that soaked us. We reached Manolo Tamayo's camp and he showed us a place to sleep on the edge of a very nice little wood. We waited there for Tuto Almeida, who apparently knows this area very well, but he didn't arrive all day.

5

The information system worked perfectly. Tuto Almeida brought Argemiro, who will take us to the house at night; on the other hand, a man called Torres sent his buddy Fidencio to investigate whether there are Guards nearby. He returned in the late afternoon saying there weren't any. A man came from La Mina [Las Minas] with a fantastic plan to attack Las Minas, where there are 40 soldiers without a leader; he asked for two men to deal with a snitch. We told him to stop screwing around, to send bullets and to

kill the snitch with his own men, and to send them here afterwards. According to the man, the things we asked for will arrive tomorrow. When we need food we will send a message asking for it with a 27[4] in this form. The trip was really bad but we finally made it to the house where we slept until dawn.

6

We spent the day sleeping and drying out our clothes. Argemiro went to investigate the trail and came back saying that there were two alternatives: to continue at night to Agualrevés or to continue in the daytime to take La Nevada. We chose the second option, leaving tomorrow early. The man who had promised to bring bullets didn't come.

7

We began our march early climbing a tremendous hill but along a good trail; in the middle of Argemiro's cleared field I had a sudden weak spell and couldn't continue at the vanguard's pace. One of the fat guys from Havana was worse off. We climbed a slope and, after passing a small stand of pine trees and some open woods with a good view of Malverde, we reached a banana plantation where two young women were working. When we called to them they ran away and we had to catch them. They turned out to be Adventists, from the Moya family, very nice young black women. It was agreed that they would make us a little boiled yucca and we would wait in a small wood because it was dangerous to cross La Nevada during the day. You have to cross the main road in a very populated place. The fatso from Havana, whose last name is Capote,[5] is already completely wiped out and he was given the opportunity to leave; he readily agreed. His compañero was also offered the same chance to leave and he accepted with similar haste. We also let go a kid from Guantánamo whose brother deserted, and when he was captured, he talked his head off. We gave the kid a peso to leave.

Argemiro was taking them when he bumped into Polo and Jesús Cid who had come looking for us; Cid brought 40 30.06 bullets and some useless pieces of nylon. He was returning from the spot where he found the deserters with the two big guys, and the little one remained in Argemiro's care. The news they brought was that there were a lot of Guards in Santa Ana and that there were troops in Turquino; that there had been fighting for two days in the area of Estrada Palma and Raúl was wounded. We decided then to head to Turquino by the elevated area of La Cantimplora.

One of their brothers of the [Adventist] faith went to confirm that there were Guards in Santa Ana, but the report was false. We agreed with Argemiro that we should retreat to a little wood in El Pinalito and that we would wait for him there until tomorrow. When the Moya girls brought us the food, they advised us that there are a lot of Guards in the areas of El Naranjo and La Cantimplora. We thanked them for the information and decided to continue traveling as planned. Early in the evening we reached the meeting place and slept there.

8

Not too early, Argemiro arrived with the guide from the other slope and we began the march. Before leaving Evelio, the muleteer who joined us in Peladero, asked to leave because he felt very sick with a cold and had a skin rash; Almeida denied his request. We walked some distance and then we had to wait until nightfall; in the meantime Argemiro went to a little store in Dos Brazos and arranged a contact in the house of a Spaniard where we could eat. Before going down the slope we ate some welcome watermelons. We reached Dos Brazos at night, and from there we followed the road about two kilometers until we again crossed the river called La Mula and began the final ascent. It was a long and fatiguing climb, completed at 11:30 at night. We started to cook and, in a moment of carelessness, Evelio fled, leaving all his things behind. I began to have a toothache that kept me from sleeping until 4:30 in the morning.

9

At 6:00 everyone was up and about. We spent the morning relaxing and then began an arduous climb until we finally reached the slope of Ocujal. Before we got there, Maceo suffered one of his frequent attacks of colic and I had to give him an injection. At the top of the slope there was a little ranch with a vegetable garden filled with food that provided abundant meals for us during the day. We camped in a nearby wood.

10

We woke up feeling energetic, but we only went to the end of the woods, which was about a kilometer, where we found some large fields. Argemiro went first to visit a friend of his called Vasalo, who told him that there were no Guards around, but that there were some pro-Batista neighbors whom we should avoid being seen by. We had to wait all day in the woods while Argemiro and Emilio, the other peasant guide, went to explore the terrain. They returned about nightfall with the news that there was a small ranch

near water which we could reach easily as it wasn’t far and the trail was good, except for one slope in the woods. Argemiro took leave of us because he was about to return and we gave him a letter to send to David and two shotguns to take to his house.

At night we set out on our march again, but when we reached Paso Malo we had to stop and spend the night there because it was very difficult to go further. I slept like a baby on some soft earth.

11

We woke late and began the march with little enthusiasm. In an hour we arrived at the little ranch where we ate the root vegetables we had picked two days ago. At 10:00 we started marching again slowly and painfully, all day long, through some really bad headlands with a lot of liana vines. In the afternoon we reached a stream that was a tributary of the Naranjo and we camped there; we still had some food from the field we had passed to make soup. Then I made the unpleasant discovery that I was missing a part of the Thompson machine gun that must have been dropped when I helped Alejandro carry the Madsen. Tomorrow I will go and look for it early.

12

I searched for the [missing] part, aided by Joel up to the place where I remembered having handled it, without finding it. We quickly returned and found the group right away, as it had practically not moved because the guide went to the house of an uncle to inquire about the troops. He returned at 3:00 p.m. saying that there were [no Guards] in the immediate area, and that they had already gone on to Turquino with dogs.

We walked a little farther and waited in front of a thicket, but we had to wait for the evening so we could pick the food. As there were several men searching for fruit, I put Sinecio on guard duty; soon Cuervo joined him, apparently to talk to him. In a little while William came with the news that they had both disappeared. I said firmly, “Sinecio wouldn’t leave,” but I was mistaken. The two of them had left, taking the Springfield, a Remington repeater rifle and about 100 bullets between them. Israel and I went to wait for them on the trail until nightfall, but they didn’t show up. With some difficulty we reached the camp on the banks of the stream. There the story of the desertion was doing the rounds: “Cuervo is a bandit and Sinecio is another; both are fleeing from regular justice; Banderas and Israel have a plantation of marijuana and they’ll probably go back there...”

With Almeida we resolved that tomorrow we would send Israel and Banderas a message and give them the chance to leave if they want.[6]

13

We got up at 3:30 and undertook the same arduous march, but at dawn we were hit by a heavy thunderstorm and we couldn't continue until 6:30. By that time we were going around in such circles that we decided to go to the first house we saw. Within 10 minutes we were inside Manuel Díaz's house, hearing that the [government] troops had been there for 10 days and had only left two days ago. The little rock trenches and little huts they had made were still there. According to the man, there were about 100 of them and they had gone with two dogs toward Agualrevés, skirting around Turquino, leaving one patrol with a lieutenant in the house. Our men were worried and the situation was so clear that we resolved to leave immediately.

We plunged into the woods again. During one stop we sent Israel and Banderas to look for the deserters and we took their weapons away from them, as we thought we should let them go; but they said they didn't want to leave and promised to return. They left their backpacks in a cave on the way and departed; we were thus reduced to 24 men. Instructions were sent to Bayamo, Santiago and Yara not to give them anything and to detain them if they asked for money. We kept walking, coming out of the woods at about 4:00. At that time we passed a cornfield and, as we crossed it, Acuña thought he heard voices shouting that we were stealing the food (what they were really shouting was that it was about to rain and dinner was being prepared. Believing this, the vanguard took over the house and Almeida went there. He immediately set about cooking squash and some flour.

While we waited for the food, Pena[7] called us to tell us that there was a plan for a group desertion, led by Vilo and supported by *el Mexicano* ["the Mexican"],[8] William and the guide, who would take them to where the snitch was, kill him, take the money and then dedicate themselves to banditry. Hermes, whom they had tried to encourage [to join them], was the whistle-blower. According to him, William had backed out after the desertion of the other two. We spoke to old man Acuña, who didn't believe this was [his son] Vilo's attitude. Then we called William, who said there were two plotters, *el Mexicano* and Hermes; they were going to desert at La Plata, and then they would go and find the snitch in Las Vegas de Jibacoa. William swore that Vilo wasn't involved in the plot and that he knew nothing about the guide. We told him to fill in the details and transmit it.

We ate what was there in the hut, and swearing the occupants (a black couple) to silence we gave them five pesos. We went to sleep in a ravine alongside the house.

14

At dawn we began the march again, and in a few hours we were at Fernando Martínez's house. Enrique, Pedro and the guide went to find the owner while we waited in a nearby thicket. It took him a while to return because the man was working in a nearby cornfield. He immediately offered to find us food and to go to Palma Mocha to Emilio Cabrera's house to see where the troops were. He planned to go at night but rain prevented this, so he decided to send a nephew tomorrow at dawn. We set up camp in a comfortable little gully and they treated us like kings there. The problem of Hermes and *el Mexicano* was resolved when Hermes himself told *el Mexicano* that it seemed as though his plan had been found out and he came to us to clarify the situation by saying that at no time had he thought of deserting, but rather had asked the commander for permission to go and kill two snitches. We let it pass, as though it were true, to avoid more complications. What is evident is that Hermes conducted himself badly.

15

We woke up in a bad mood, savoring the hammock for the first time in several days. Later I dedicated myself to pulling teeth, extracting one from the brother of the owner of the house and another from Pedro. Afterwards Pedro felt indisposed but despite this walked a stretch to the little coffee plantation where we stopped to wait for the kid who was coming from Palma Mocha. Half an hour later he arrived saying he had not found Emilio but he had seen his brother-in-law, who had told him that about a week ago our people had gone to El Infierno and that a troop had gone up toward Las Cuevas the same day. According to the kid we couldn't reach that point in a single day through the woods because it was a long way. We decided to spend the night there and leave before dawn, guided by the same Martínez. At night he brought us a pot of corn flour. Pedro couldn't sleep all night because of the pain from his tooth.

16

We set out early slashing through the scrublands at the base of Turquino. The climb was difficult but we finally made it to near Emilio's house. The guide, Argelio Campos, went to look for him and brought him back after a while. The first thing he did was to advise us that Lalo Sardiñas was on the

other side of the river with 40 men ready to ambush the army. He complained that a clash like that would be prejudicial and that if [Lalo] didn't leave all the local people would move to the beach. We sent a warning to Lalo to leave and ordered some *malanga* to be cooked for us. Lalo responded that we were the ones who should leave. We interpreted this as an excess of jealousy on Lalo's part.

We ate beside the river but at night we couldn't climb up to where Lalo was because of the darkness and the difficulty of the trail. At our request, Lalo came down to say that he couldn't move at that time because he had to watch his group; his attitude was modest and he explained that he was stuck in that position because he was following the commander's instructions [to wait for government troops led by Ángel Sánchez Mosquera[9]] but had not seen them yet. Lalo told us that he had to flee because he had killed a man in a house he had entered to search and seize a revolver. It's not known who the man was who was killed. We slept beside the main road.

Notebook V

17

We got up early and went to the ridge where Lalo was camped. There we greeted old friends and some who had recently joined, like Carlos Mas, who had helped us a lot when we were on the run seven months ago. We climbed to the slope that separates Palma Mocha from La Plata, along a new spur that totally confused me. Finally we reached the camp that they had made near Villa's house, and we saw fresh tracks. We waited for the rain to stop there and then continued to another little house we knew; from there we sent Enrique and Crescencio's younger son (whom Lalo had rejected as useless) to the Haitian's house to get information. In a while Ameijeiras dropped by with *el Maestro* ["the Teacher," Luis Barreras] and another member of the rearguard, greeting us warmly. We kept climbing a hill to reach where Fidel was. We were well received and we chatted with him for a long time. I met, although fleetingly, [Raúl] Chibás, [Felipe] Pazos, [Roberto] Agramonte and the new doctor [Júlio Martínez Páez], who is a surgeon and a first-class guy. Fidel told me of the plans and the situation. He's working on a document which proposes the immediate resignation of Batista, rejects the military junta and proposes a member of the civic institutions as a temporary [president] for no longer than one year, within which new elections are to be held. It also proposes a minimum program that includes the basis for an agrarian reform. Fidel didn't tell me this but it

seems to me that Pazos and Chibás refined the declaration quite a bit.[10] He also told me that poor Universo had been relieved of his highly valued post and was now charged with attending to the old timers. The troop has more than 200 men; there are new promotions, Ramirito to captain, Ciro to lieutenant,[11] *el Guajiro* [Crespo] to the post Universo had, Almeida to second commander and me to captain and head of a [new] column that is to hunt down Sánchez Mosquera in Palma Mocha. I have the small platoon that came with me from El Uvero, Ramiro's platoon plus that of Lalo, who is second-in-command of the column. After we spoke with *el Guajiro*, I slept until 1:30.

18

I left early with the men, first going to the Haitian's house where I treated some people; then we continued at a slow pace to the [part of the Sierra] Maestra that separates the Palma Mocha and La Plata rivers. The commander ordered me to set up an ambush on the slope. I sent a message to Lalo to come up and he came at night to the slope where we slept.

19

From early in the morning we set up the ambush on the ridge where two small trails meet. At 9:00 a peasant climbed up saying that the troops had been there since last night. We ordered him to investigate again and he returned at 12:00 to tell us that Fermín, the guide who had been detained, had been released and that the troops had left without saying where they were going. I sent word to Fidel and left for the slope with the intention of cutting across the Sierra Maestra; but half way there we encountered some supplies sent by Crescencio and we decided to distribute them. Then a second letter arrived advising me that an enemy troop would have to climb up to La Jeringa via Palma Mocha. We then decided to spend the night right there and climb the Sierra Maestra early. We had already explored the area and nobody had passed by there.

20

As the day dawned we got up to initiate the march to the Sierra Maestra, but Guillermo arrived with his platoon saying that Fidel was coming with the rest of the troops and that there was a vague plan for us to take them up the Sierra Maestra. It seemed preferable to me to send Lalo reinforced with one of Ramiro's squads to seize the Sierra Maestra. I went to a small ridge to prepare an ambush. In a little while we received an order from Fidel to advance half way. There was no sign of Rural Guards as we went down the

slope. Camilo, who had joined me, explored a lateral trail up to the road, but he didn't find anyone. I sent Crucito to check the tobacco shed and nobody was found there either. Incidentally, Fidel had told me not to let Marciano go. I sent Crucito with Maceo to explore the trail up to Turquino [Peak] and, if they got there, Maceo should immediately climb up by way of El Infierno. Marciano asked to go with them but returned at 2:00 saying that the others had left him behind and that the soldiers had gone up to Turquino.

In a while Crucito arrived very concerned because he had seen the same tracks that Marciano had seen and also a newly eaten cane stalk left behind. But Crucito didn't know that Marciano claimed that he couldn't continue because he felt sick. Marciano had already been sent as William's guide to take a message to Lalo. William had been advised not to let him go in the crossing and, if it were necessary, to use some leverage to get his gun away from him. A short time later Maceo returned because he had misunderstood the instructions and couldn't find the troop. I had to send Alejandro with another message.

I had planned to stay in the little zinc house near the road but the scouts arrived with the news that it was inhabited; they had also found the body of one of our men, already almost a skeleton. We had to change plans, but I had to wait for a message from Lalo. So I left two men, Crucito and Enrique Chadman, to go by way of the road. Crucito was left behind because he was sick and Enrique, also, who had a touch of appendicitis. We climbed up to Filiberto's ridge again and slept in La Aguada where he has his vegetable patch.

21

We got up at dawn and Alejandro came bringing news from Fidel setting up a meeting with me at Pelado Peak. We conferred there for a while and decided to eat the cow. I went off later to wait patiently for the Rural Guards to leave again and attack the caves. We descended slowly and I took advantage of the occasion to turn loose Enrique, Aristides Guerra (the poet who is a little shit), Antonio (one of those from Las Vegas who came for a bit of sport, a brave and popular person) and Maceo, who was very sick. We had barely said goodbye to them when Marciano came with the news that there were troops below. We quickly prepared ourselves for an ambush and we were there when the report came that the presumed Guards were some mules that we had seen climbing up to a little house that was often occupied

by the Rural Guards. We went down but it was already night when we arrived at Corría's house, where there was food and all the equipment that had been sent. I got a second-hand canteen, an excellent mountain knife and a very good sabre. We spent the night awake making plans.

22

In the morning we divvied up the supplies. The group came out well armed. As we were leaving the house we heard a shot. The guilty party was brought to us and it turned out to be Ramonín; the commander decided to shoot him. Lalo, Crescencio and I had to intercede to lessen the penalty as the poor guy didn't deserve such a drastic penalty.

In the early morning hours we officers signed a collective letter of condolence. There were various promotions. I was given the rank of commander.[12] *El Guajiro* Luis was given the rank of lieutenant, Ciro captain and Raúl Castro [Mercader] (who had been demoted for the insubordination of his whole platoon) and William were made lieutenants. Nine volunteers, all unarmed, were incorporated into my column,[13] and were put under William's command.

I have forgotten to note that Marciano did indeed escape without giving William any time to react, and William went after him. The case of Marciano and his suspicious attitude was reviewed and it was decided to be on the alert. We killed another cow—actually it was an enormous bull of which we were only able to consume a piece, salting the rest. The day passed with nothing else new, except the interception of various gifts for Fidel, which we put to good use. At night the members of the general staff ate sumptuously in Corría's house.

23

We didn't get up very early and our calculations led us to believe it would take us six hours to get [where we were going] so we weren't in a hurry to leave. One of our peasant friends turned up with a tied-up prisoner he had captured below. The man had a credible story, but when he was asked where he'd got the .45 revolver found on him he said he had bought it from a friend in his neighborhood. But Lalo recognized the revolver as that given to Rafael Castro to use on a mission. The little guy was threatened with being shot if he didn't tell us the truth and he agreed.

Shortly, Pepín Lupiáñez came; he had been given leave on my advice two or three months ago because he had an inguinal hernia that was quite advanced. Pepín came with four other compañeros but I decided not to let

them join without equipment. Pepín protested in an angry tone but accepted my decision. The mystery of the revolver was partially solved when its owner came and indicated it was his. He confirmed that Rafael had lent it but he didn't know to whom and that an unknown man had sold it for five pesos to the peasant, threatening to kill him if he told anyone who had given it to him. We accepted the man into a squadron and departed.

When we reached an elevated point we heard the disagreeable news that a member of the vanguard squadron called "*el Chino*" Wong had deserted. I immediately called two men and sent them after the deserter who, on top of everything, had taken a .22 rifle. They were ordered to shoot him on sight, take his rifle and return immediately. The two men were Ibrahim and Baldo. The first was a compañero of the deserter and said that he wasn't eager to kill him but would show the way. We reached Filiberto's spring and slept there.

24

We got up in no hurry and sent Walfrido to find out about the Rural Guards at Emilio's house, accompanied by *el Mexicano*. We gave them until 2:30 but they weren't back by then, so we set out down the trail with a certain apprehension because the kid I'd sent to look for Acuña said that he had seen recent tracks of a lot of people in the hills. When we arrived at the tobacco shed they reached us. Nothing had happened; the tracks were those of some peasant*s* who had been looking for us.

At dusk we came to a house near Emilio's place and I sent for him. He arrived with news of a suspected snitch who lives near Fernando Martínez in Las Cuevas. There were no soldiers there and Emilio assumed there weren't any in Ocujal, either. We agreed that tomorrow he would go to Ocujal to confirm this. Israel and Banderas came with him, bringing a new volunteer, an unremarkable little man who doesn't seem too bad. Israel told me that they had arrived there but hadn't been able to find the two fugitives. Sinecio came by, but when he learned that Israel was there he left immediately. David sent us a letter in which he warned us about the possible incorporation of snitches into the troop armed with machine guns to destroy us. He was taken prisoner because of the accusation of a Haitian called Manuel but he was released right away. We slept on the banks of the Palma Mocha River.

25

We got up late again and spent the morning drawing up war plans, revising previous ones we hadn’t been able to carry out because there were no Rural Guards in Las Cuevas. The plan was to attack Estrada Palma and then to continue to attack Yara and Veguitas, going back to the starting point. A man who claimed he was trying to join us was taken prisoner. We questioned him and he didn’t seem to be a snitch but rather a crook. We decided to reject him, sending him back and giving him a couple of pesos. The previous day he had been at Emilio’s house asking about us. Emilio arrived at 3:30 bringing news there were no Rural Guards in Ocujal. We then decided to do some target practice which we did at the river, giving Emilio the responsibility of advising the authorities if the shots could be heard from afar. The weapons performed well, except for my Madsen machine gun, which didn’t fire because it was very dirty. We slept again in the same place.

26

Early in the morning we cleaned the machine gun and the bullets that were also very dirty and then slowly began the climb up the hill. Pedro was sick in his stomach and dizzy, and I had to leave him behind with Joel. On arrival I sent a message to Crescencio to send me some armed people, and Lalo went personally to see if a message had come from Rafael Castro. I sent a message with Crescencio to the commander explaining our intentions regarding Estrada Palma. At night a message came from Crescencio in which he informed me that, in any case, he would try to get in touch with Fidel, although he didn’t know where he was, that he was sending me five new men, among whom was the man we had rejected a few days ago, and that he had 14 boxes of powdered milk, rice and some meat. Lalo returned to say that the kid had left the message and returned to await further communication. He arrived almost at dawn with the news that Rafael had given him a horse so that he could return quickly to report that he was going to investigate and he left in the morning. We also had a visit from José Isaac (the man from El Purgatorio where I had had asthma) but I didn’t pay much attention because I was tired. We also had news from Marciano’s place saying that of the two who had been sent to kill the deserter, only Baldo had been seen carrying two revolvers.

27

We spent the morning waiting for news when the radio reported the attack on Estrada Palma: Fidel had got there ahead of us. According to the radio

reports, 200 men under the command of Raúl Castro[14] had attacked Estrada Palma from four points and the barracks, under the command of Sergeant Vera, gave up without a fight. The guards were taken prisoner and brought before Fidel. We resolved then to wait and see what we could do, but generally we had the idea of crossing to the other side of Turquino. In a while a peasant came to advise us that around 200 army men were marching toward El Cristo.

Lalo and I decided that it was better to strike a quick blow on the other side of Turquino. In Lalo's opinion, it would be possible to take a shortcut using a trail he knew. We collected some more supplies and set out. It was very tiring. We walked from 6:00 to 12:00 at night, when we cooked and went to bed at 2:00 in the morning.

28

We called Lalo early and followed the trail until we encountered Marciano's son-in-law, who was bringing Baldo and someone else sent from another troop from which we had some news. Baldo's story was simple and pathetic: the compañero, Ibrahim Acosta, who was a friend of the deserter, took him out along some other trails, then he told him frankly that he couldn't take him further because he had disgraced himself in the barrio; he then proposed selling him the revolvers and leaving; later he told him not to return and he tried to go. At that point Baldo killed him firing three shots. The body remained in the Sierra Maestra unburied. On Baldo's return trip he ran into the small group that had come to join up and he struck up contact with them. A member of the new troop gave the following account: they had left from a place near Guisa and were wandering around (losing men who changed their minds) until they reached the La Jeringa area. They encountered our man there and identified themselves. Three men from the new troop, who had deserted because they were tired, found Ibrahim's body; two of them became scared and turned back immediately to rejoin the troop, while the third went on. In a letter I told Oscar, the head of the group, that he should remain hidden in the area of Palma Mocha until I contacted him and I gave him some advice about what should be done. I also advised Crescencio to attend to those people and the same for Emilio. Something curious happened with that kid, which is an indication of the discipline of the troop: when I gave the order to call him, they told me that he had gone. I immediately sent two men from the rearguard to look for him, but at that

moment the man appeared and the message was passed along for the men not to go.

After three hours of marching, when we reached the top of a steep hill, Vilo appeared saying that two men had gone to find Marciano's son-in-law. I immediately sent Pupo to look for them with orders to send Marciano's son-in-law back and to return themselves. At that point I warned all of them about the dangers of desertion and that they should go and find the body of the deserter. We continued the march, slowed down by two of the men from Camagüey who had joined recently and who were not used to hiking. On reaching a hill in the Sierra Maestra at 6:30 in the evening, we decided to stop because the group was completely worn out. We camped right there, sleeping in considerably cold conditions.

29

We got up early and in a few minutes reached the place where Ibrahim's body was. The cadaver was face down, with a bullet hole in his left lung and with his hands together and fingers bent as though they had been tied. I'm not totally convinced about the legality of that death, although I used it as an example. In an hour we reached the house of the man from Santa Clara [Julián Pérez], which was empty. Lalo had slept there before. I immediately ordered two men from each squadron to cook and asked for volunteers to bury the dead man.

We hung out there until noon, at which time it was decided we should leave, sending Orestes first with another man to take a message to Las Minas. We had taken prisoner a man who turned out to be none other than the guy who had continued after the three deserters had found the body. He's nicknamed "the barber," he's 41 years old and not very well. He was in the house of Candelario, a dark-skinned man we had bumped into the day before, and he showed him the way. As we were leaving they brought us three detainees, one of whom was the same kid we had sent off yesterday who was bringing two compañeros. He hadn't brought the .22 rifle so I held him as a prisoner. The other two said they didn't know *el Chino*. After marching for a while, on reaching the clearing of the first house, we subjected them to a detailed interrogation from which we learned that they did in fact know *el Chino* and that they had gone to take his gun from him, but he wasn't at home; then they decided to hide that fact to avoid being rejected. The three were separated to be held under observation. The communications from the army described an encounter with one of our

groups in which, according to them, we had lost a man. We slept alongside a little stream where we ate our by now maggoty food.

30

According to the owner of the little house nearby, we were two hours from California. We awaited news of an interview that we had requested with the representative from Las Minas, Armando Oliver. The reply came at dusk, arranging for a meeting from 7:00 a.m. to about 11:00. We set out, and at about 10:00 we reached the meeting place where I met Armando Oliver and a compañero he had brought [Jorge Abich]. He had a plan to attack on Sunday and simultaneously to capture [Major] Casillas, who went to visit a lover almost every Sunday. But we didn't want to wait that long to try to direct attention away from Fidel. In principle, we had agreed on the day after tomorrow, but then Lalo was in a hurry and I agreed on tomorrow, although it seemed too rushed to me. We went back to Oscar's house and slept there after a succulent meal.

31

We arose early after two hours' sleep but we didn't start out right away, waiting for some breakfast. We began the march in full daylight, accompanied by four new members, two kids from the hill, one from Holguín and one from Mayarí, the latter two are hot-tempered types. We reached the camp and I went to sleep, setting the departure time for 2:00 in the afternoon. We left at that time, soon reaching the slopes of the Sierra Maestra where we had left all the backpacks before setting out. We then continued at a fast pace, crossing a pasture to reach the California area. We had to go to the home of Santiesteban, who had a pick-up truck for us and others who would be going to Las Minas. We were late and, because we couldn't arrive [on time], we sent someone called Peña to see if the trucks were there. He returned in an hour with the news that the truck was waiting for us. We were going to continue when the problem arose of a party in the house we had to pass in order to reach the road; we decided to bring together all the partygoers and read them "the book" so that they would keep quiet. We walked along the road until we encountered the first truck and, almost immediately, the other two. Lalo climbed into the first one, Ramiro and I in the second and Ciro in the third. After nearly three hours we reached Las Minas where we proceeded to take prisoner a couple of snitches and we also seized a couple of cars in which we continued to Bueycito. We stopped near the hamlet and sent a coal truck ahead to see if

there were Rural Guards watching the village. The result was negative, so the car that was to blow up the bridge connecting Bueycito with the Central Highway took off. We started out leaving Noda's squadron with the job of stopping all traffic. Vilo's squadron had remained in Las Minas to defend the village. The plan was as follows: Ramiro would circle the barracks on both sides with his platoon. Lalo, with his men, would be ready to intervene on the west side and Ciro with mine in front. Armando would focus the car on the guard post and Ramiro would seize it, rushing through the gate to take all the unwary people so there would be no bloodshed. All the guardsmen who were sleeping in their quarters had to be taken prisoner at the same time.

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1. Josué País was an active member of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba who, along with his brother Frank País, organized dangerous and heroic actions. He was assassinated on June 30 in that city, along with his compañeros in struggle, Floro Bistel and Pascual Rosales.
2. Aristides Guerra (*Nonito*) was one of the most useful collaborators in the region.
3. Hipólito Torres Guerra's (*Polo*) home in La Mesa later became Che's base of operations.
4. The "27" is circled in the diary.
5. Gilberto Rodríguez Capote later returned to the troop and died heroically at Pino del Agua with the rank of lieutenant. See the chapter in *Reminiscences…*, "Return Journey."
6. In the case of Israel and Banderas these suspicions were baseless. See the chapter "The Return" in Che's *Reminiscences*…
7. In the chapter "Return Journey" in his *Reminiscences*…, Che explains that Hermes Leyva is the person who made the denunciation. Of that group, William Rodríguez remained until his death as an officer of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Vilo became Commander Juan Vitalio Acuña (*Joaquín*) in Che´s guerrilla group in Bolivia.
8. Francisco Rodríguez (*el Mexicano*, "the Mexican") reached the rank of captain, but later became a traitor to the revolution.
9. Ángel Sánchez Mosquera was infamous for his brutality and had been promoted rapidly to lieutenant colonel.
10. On July 12, 1957, the Manifesto of the Sierra Maestra was released, signed by Fidel Castro, Felipe Pazos and Raúl Chibás. When the Miami

Pact was announced in October 1957 by some of the same political leaders, Fidel Castro energetically denied that the July 26 Movement had been a signatory to that pact. These events are described in the chapter “A Betrayal in the Making” in Che’s *Reminiscences*…

11. In the chapter “A Betrayal in the Making” in *Reminiscences*… Che notes that Ciro was promoted to captain, not lieutenant as he records here.

12. In his memoir, *La Victoria Estratégica*, Fidel notes that in mid-July 1957, after the battle of El Uvero, “we decided to create Column Four under the command of Ernesto Guevara. Che had distinguished himself in that tough battle.” Che had originally joined the *Granma* expedition as troop doctor. At El Uvero “with a small bodyguard he took care of our wounded. He was the first officer [in the Rebel Army] to be promoted as a commander.” p. 20.

13. For tactical reasons this second column of the Rebel Army (led by now Commander Che Guevara) was referred to as “Column Four” with the objective of making Batista’s army think there were more columns.

14. The attack was actually carried out by Guillermo García.

August 1957

1

The plan couldn't be carried out because Ramiro didn't arrive on time and the sentry, after hearing suspicious noises, went to find out what was going on. I confronted him, giving him the order to halt and when he made a move I shot at him, but the bullet missed and I was left defenseless; the man shot at me but I dodged and ran and I got away. The shoot-out began and at that moment I heard the explosion at the bridge. I sent Israel to look for four or five men to attack along my flank, but nobody came. Then I went to the combat zone and when I arrived the soldiers were surrendering. There were 12 guardsmen in the barracks and six were wounded. We had suffered one fatality: Pedro Rivero had been hit by a bullet in the thorax, and two others had more or less superficial wounds. We burned down the barracks after taking everything that might be useful to us, and we left in the trucks, taking prisoner the sergeant and the snitch Orán. A man called Valolo accompanied us in the last truck and treated us to cold beer when we arrived at his little store.[1]

We kept on the move and when we made it to the bridge called Macanacúm we placed some cartridges between the planks, partially destroying it. We reached Las Minas where the people were voting in the street by cheering us on.

A black guy, who is one of our people there, made an impromptu speech asking us to free the two prisoners. I replied that they had been taken so that their presence would prevent repression against the townspeople, but if this was their will I had nothing to add.

We continued traveling in the trucks, watching the sky to see if any planes appeared; after two long hours, when we reached California, we saw the first one, but it just circled around the area. We arrived at the house of the Spanish storekeeper and I treated the wounded there. One had a flesh wound from an exploding bullet that had peeled off the outer skin exposing the muscle; another's hand was perforated by a bullet from a small caliber weapon. It was an insignificant wound. The third had a big lump on his head produced by a piece of a wall that fell when kicked by a wounded mule. After treating them we continued in the truck to the place where the road ends, and then started the climb up the hill.

We were now minus several of the newcomers but we had been joined by a radio technician who seemed very committed. The army troops were

already in California. We continued on our path slowly, and by mid-afternoon reached the foothills of the Sierra Maestra where we had left our backpacks. There we divided up the guns and munitions as well as the clothes and dismissed those who had shown signs of cowardice during the battle. There was one man who wasn't sent away but transferred to another troop—Fidel's.[2] After the attack we were joined by one of the survivors of the *Corynthia*, to whom I'd given the Garand. His name was Fernando Virelles and he had the rank of commander in a troop where there was a profusion of ranks, starting with two generals. According to him, there were 27 men [on the *Corynthia*] and some are still scattered around. We retired to the old position by the creek and slept there.

2

We got up in a bad mood and, while we were breaking camp, I sent Raúl [Castro Mercader] to set up an ambush on the road leading up to California. We hid conveniently in two clearings that the soldiers have to pass. I already knew that they had a prisoner called Quinteros as their guide, who had sent word that he was forced to guide the soldiers and that we shouldn't shoot him. At 2:00 I ordered Raúl to fall back and we all stayed in the ambush position. I sent Ramonín to Oscar's house to find out if there was an expeditious way to go to Santa Ana, and at nightfall we began our march. Ramonín arrived on the way with news that nobody was there [at Oscar's house]. We climbed slowly and arrived at midnight at Juan Corría's house. He was quite obsequious toward us. I took 500 pesos of merchandise from him, including chocolate, condensed milk and beer. Just before dawn we climbed to a little coffee grove near the house and almost everyone bedded down there except me; I went back down to give an injection to Corría's wife who was sick. I took the opportunity to listen to the morning news, but there was nothing of interest because media censorship had been reimposed since the day of the attack. The government had spread the news that a rebel group had attacked Bueycito, and was repelled, with three dead and several wounded. That would mean that two of the wounded had died.

3

We spent the day quietly, stocking up on some things we needed. I gave Juancito Corría some IOUs that he could collect in Bayamo. In the afternoon Oscar came with the news that [troops] were in La Gloria, which was a place we had left, and that others were coming from La Vigía to end up at Santa Ana. As we were in a small wooded area, I decided to leave; we

headed for a coffee plantation belonging to someone called Papi, intending to proceed down from there along the road and take La Nevada. Oscar, who was going ahead, all of a sudden saw soldiers coming and gave the alarm. We hid as best we could; but when it occurred to Oscar to take another look, he saw that the four people had nothing to do with the Rural Guards.

We left along the little trail and in a short while a tremendous rainstorm began. I took cover under a rock with Armando Oliver. A man called Arnoldo Castellanos caught up with me there, bringing news of the four "soldiers," who were himself, another compañero, and two young women that Armando had told me about. The girls had come to stay with us, but I refused to give my permission. In any case I told him to tell them to come up from where they were at Juan Corría's house so I could greet them. They arrived in a while. One of them turned out to be sort of Armando's girlfriend. I told them that they absolutely couldn't stay but the youngest (a 17-year-old, Oniria Gutiérrez) insisted, telling me a tale about some horrendous demands by Castellanos, whose house she was supposed to go to. I let her stay on probation, while the other one left happily with Armando, who also took the dynamiter. We slept curled up in Papi's little house.

4

I resolved to ambush the Rural Guards on the road, above where we slept. A guide that Oscar had provided showed us the way. We set out expecting the imminent arrival of the guardsmen and spent the whole day that way without any incident other than the machine-gunning of La Nevada by the air force. We were joined by a large number of men from Las Minas, among them the young black guy who had disappeared during the shooting at Bueycito. I assigned him to be a carrier because he no longer had any other use. In the early evening we returned to Papi's camp by way of a well-worn path cut through the bushes that enabled us to take positions without being seen, although by now all the neighbors knew where we were. The new recruits from Las Minas asked permission to go and find a brother and some others who had gone to look for their belongings in Santa Ana and I agreed.

5

I decided, against the opinion of the captains, to attack Casillas's forces where they were, and for that purpose we mobilized toward the ambush site of the previous day and continued, following a slope to where they were. But shots and gunfire were heard on the other side of the slope, along with

two bazooka shots or something like that. We then calculated that the soldiers were about to come up and we again hid in ambush to wait for them. But they never showed up although we spent the whole day waiting.

In the evening I sent Lalo with his platoon to shoot it out with the Rural Guards, but they couldn't do anything because the guardsmen were down in a hole. It was already night when he returned to camp. The same young black guy who had fled in Bueycito deserted; I sent someone to look for him in a house where I knew he could be and they brought him back. Nothing was done to him because he's only 17 years old. We rejected the incorporation of two youths from Holguín, who were 15 and 14 years old, and also the reincorporation of man from Holguín because he had turned tail and run at Bueycito. The man promised to bring from Holguín one of the survivors of the *Corynthia* called Ranful [Carlos Rafuls]. Oscar took them to his house.

6

At 4:00 in the morning we got up, leaving after 5:00. We quickly crossed the clearing of the Sierra Maestra, placing ourselves on the other side of the main road and crossing to La Uvita, where we arrived at Matamoros's house where we bought a few supplies. Immediately the whole town poured out to greet us. Aristidio turned up and in his pompous manner told us about all the problems they had had and offered us a cow, which I accepted right away. He reported to me about the number of people he had there ready to join, but I only accepted those with weapons. Papo Beatón also arrived with a group, among which were Manolo Rodríguez, two of Israel's brothers, Sabro (Papo's half-brother) and two of Rosabal's brothers. I accepted all those who were armed, not the others. They remained in Aristidio's charge. He informed me that there was a snitch called Fenzue Lien, who was causing a lot of headaches. I sent the vanguard to the heights of the Sierra Maestra to look for him and I went there with Joel and a guide. We arrived at the meeting place at 10:00. A little after 3:00 in the morning, Aristidio arrived to say they were on their way. I met with them at 4:00. The old man came accompanied by a son and son-in-law; he swore over and over again that he was a Fidelista and that people who had it in for him had made the accusation against him. I counseled him a little and let him leave again. We also arrived at daybreak.

7

Papo and one of Israel's brothers informed me of what happened in Peladero. It seems that David talked too much and told everything to a snitch cattleman. Shortly afterwards David was imprisoned, tortured and murdered,[3] and the army occupied Peladero. There they took one of Israel's father's fieldworkers and at the first blow he told everything he knew. The result was that they killed 10 people, including two of David's muleteers, took all the supplies, burned all the houses in the area and viciously beat several neighbors, some of whom were later killed, and others, like Israel's dad, suffered fractures. According to the reports there were three snitches and I asked for volunteers to kill them. There were several offers but I selected Israel, his brother Samuel, Manolito and Rodolfo. They left early with some signs that read: Executed for betraying the people—M-26-7.[4] Papo went with them taking a reply to a letter I'd received offering us heavy weapons; I told them where and how we had to find them. The day passed without any other incident besides the sending back of several young kids from Las Minas who had already shown signs of cowardice. We let the young black deserter go, too. Casillas's troops haven't moved from La Gloria.

8

We got up early and set out on the trail to the heights of El Hombrito in a foul mood. On reaching the main road a messenger was waiting for me to tell me that Gilberto Capote, the ex-sergeant *rajado*,[5] was coming with four men, all armed. I agreed to wait for them on the road. We continued walking a long time until we reached Fidencio Santana's house. From there we were sent to the home of the neighbor Perucho, who has a creek running through in his land, where we all settled in. I had heard on the radio the news that four rebels had been killed in combat in Peladero, and I thought that might be Israel and the kids who might have been surprised somewhere and killed. I sent for Polo so I could talk with him the next day. A black man, whose name I don't remember, brought me a present of some roast pork, which was just perfect.

9

We've had a large number of visitors since this morning. Polo came and agreed to go to the beach tomorrow morning to see where the Rural Guards are and to bring one of Israel's brothers and old man Antonio, a *Gallego* [Spaniard], whom we had met the last time we were in this area. The men we were waiting for didn't come because they became worn out climbing

the Sierra Maestra. A cousin of Ramonín's called Osorio came from Yao. I was very favorably impressed with him. I asked them to continue providing us with supplies. They asked me what to do with René Cuervo, the deserter from Almeida's group, the man who killed a snitch and wrote me a letter asking for pardon, but who is now screwing around in Yao. I gave the order that they should kill him if he was causing too much trouble.

The day passed calmly. I had a trail cut through the gully below to have a way out to old man Tamayo's house. There were a good number of requests for release and I had a surprise visit at night by an old deserter from Victoria de las Tunas, who had been with Camilo in the vanguard; he brought two unarmed men from Las Tunas who were rejected. In addition, a deserter from Oscar's troop who arrived from Palma Mocha was taken prisoner.

10

El Gallego Antonio arrived early from Polo's house, while Polo went to the beach to find out about the Rural Guards. Chúa came with the news that there were 25 armed *Masferreristas*[6] in Pico Verde, two of them armed with machine guns. I ordered him to go and talk with them and to bring them to the Sierra Maestra, where we would wait for them. I ordered Alejandro to take old man Antonio to Polo's house. At 4:00 p.m. he arrived saying he had accomplished his mission. Polo came from the beach saying there was no one anywhere in the area. Another of Israel's brothers called Benjamín joined us; he and old man Antonio complained of Manolito's cowardice.

At dusk Oscar arrived with Cristino [Naranjo], the dynamiter. They brought a letter from Armando Oliver saying some supplies were in Oscar's house. I sent Raúl Castro [Mercader] to wait for the *Masferreristas* and to take them prisoner, to send them with Pupo and then to go on to pick up the supplies. Oscar was to set out first with the group of rejects, who now number 16. When I asked about the deserter we were holding prisoner I learned that Alejandro had been confused and had taken him to Polo's house where he set him loose. I gave Vilo the order not to do anything and not to let anyone leave without my written order. Cristino asked to be allowed to stay with the troop and I told Armando this. Pupo arrived in the early morning hours saying that there was no one at the place where I had told them to wait.

11

We broke camp early going by the lower part below of La Leche Creek, along the trail that the guide and I had made. I left the vanguard in a coffee grove way ahead and the rearguard where the creek meets the Zorzal River. Polo treated us very well as usual. Nothing new all day.

12

The announcement of the arrival of the supplies came early. Then Chúa came to tell us that they hadn't captured the *Masferreristas* because they didn't exist; he didn't explain how it is that they had been seen. Israel arrived with his compañeros and Papo. They had killed a snitch called Jesús Suárez with two shots. There hadn't been any Guards in the whole area. I decided to send Lalo to shoot it out with Casillas's troops, which are the only ones in the vicinity. In the afternoon Raúl arrived with the supplies that were rapidly divided up.

At this point in Notebook V there is a group of blank pages with no comment afterwards by Che, nor has a consecutive Notebook VI ever been found. This leaves a substantial gap in Che's diary from August 13, 1957, to April 17, 1958. To date it has not been possible to determine anything about the missing parts of the diary, despite several unconfirmed versions. In his *Reminiscences*…, Che writes about this period that covers the actions carried out by Column Four under his command and it would appear, from the style and content of those chapters, he used the diary as his source. Notebook VII of Che's diary begins on April 18, 1958.

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1. This encounter is described in "The Attack on Bueycito" in Che's *Reminiscences*…. At the end of the chapter, he mentions the death of Frank País, "one of our most valiant combatants."
2. Sic.
3. Actually, David, the foreman, hadn't died.
4. Translator's note: "M-26-7" was a commonly used shorthand reference to the July 26 Movement.
5. Translator's note: *Rajado* is used to refer to deserters from Batista's army who joined the rebels.
6. The *Masferreristas* were a group of brutal assassins in the service of the Batista dictatorship, led by Rolando Masferrer, known for his criminal activities since the 1930s.

1958

April 1958

Notebook VII

18

I received Fidel's order entrusting me with certain duties in the area that he controlled, one of which I still can't put in the diary, the others are: to oversee the training of 200 new recruits, to help with the *planta* [radio equipment] and the newspaper[1] that are being moved here, to help in the task of collecting taxes and to work with Sorí Marín[2] (who had been transferred) on the agrarian reform. We then set out before dawn. I was somewhat dejected to leave the area that I'd had under my control for almost a year at a very critical time because Sánchez Mosquera's troops are around and more active and the area will be abandoned [to Batista's army].[3]

We walked quite a way from well before dawn until 3:00 in the afternoon, when we reached Providencia where we rested. There's no news from Fidel, who remained behind.

19

I went in the jeep to Las Vegas, where the high command was. The pilots I had to talk to were there. From our conversation it became evident that we need to go together to look for a landing strip. The best place seemed to be the facility at La Plata River, identifiable by its proximity to Turquino and where there are some good open areas. We left that same afternoon, heading toward Mario Sorial's house in Las Minas de Frío, where Evelio Laferté[4] has his school. He's an ex-prisoner who was promoted to captain and named director of the school for recruits. We spent the night there.

20

We walked all day, arriving at the beach just as the sun was setting. We slept there. A good landing strip was found some two kilometers from the coast. We slept in La Plata.

21

The pilots gave the pertinent orders to Rico Hidalgo, the person in charge of that area, to clean it up and then to make a tunnel. We kept walking and saw the new hospital, and later made it to Las Vegas, where Fidel was waiting.

22

We spent the day in discussions about the best way to coordinate what was to be sent.

23

We continued our discussions and established our code system, in perfect agreement about the tasks.

24

Marcelo (Zoilo) arrived, admitting frankly that mistakes in evaluation were to blame for the failure of the strike.[5]

25

I made a visit to see first hand what landing possibilities there could be in other areas. In Cayo Espino there's a good spot, although very rocky. The runway in Cerro, besides being not very good, is completely vulnerable to enemy action, as it's scarcely two kilometers from Estrada Palma.

26

Nothing new.

27

The pilots are called urgently to the radio station to listen to the important message from Caracas.[6] Pedro Miret also. Commander G.[7] is at the radio transmitter. I go up to Las Minas de Frío to visit the work that is way behind due to a lack of materials. When I go back down, I have to look for Pedrito Miret in Las Mercedes, who is there under the command of [Delio Gómez] Ochoa.

28

This morning we engaged in a battle with dubious results; on our side, there was one wounded. This was in a place called Nagua. The same day, but at night, I climbed up to see the commander, who had gone down to hear personally about the results of the battle.

29

This morning the C.G. [Fidel] went up and there was an extended exchange of opinions. At night we listened to a broadcast from Caracas in which Justo Carrillo[8] spoke, promising a long list of things based on the support of the military, but at the same time asking Fidel to release a manifesto praising them and commenting on the three revolts by the "pure" military men,[9] namely: the one led by Barquín,[10] [the revolt in Cienfuegos] on September 5[11] and the one that resulted in the imprisonment of Lieutenant Chinea. Fidel replied that this could be done, but that we were impeded by the feeling of hostility toward "those who had daily committed infamous crimes." He also spoke with [Manuel] Llerenas and Urrutia,[12] calling for unity to avoid discord.

30

We left mid-morning heading toward the beach where we are to prepare a landing field. We arrived at nightfall. The group was composed of Pedrito Miret, some men from the recruits' school and myself.

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1. The *planta* refers to a makeshift shortwave radio transmitter used for Radio Rebelde (Rebel Radio); the newspaper was *El Cubano Libre* (*The Free Cuban*), both created by Che in his area of operation. In the appendices there are facsimiles of some articles written by Che in *El Cubano Libre*.
2. Humberto Sorí Marín, a member of Fidel's Column One, was promoted to commander and worked as auditor in the Sierra Maestra. After the triumph of the revolution he was named agriculture minister, but later joined the counterrevolutionary bands and was captured, tried and executed in 1961.
3. For Che's account of this period, see "Interlude" in *Reminiscences…* in which he explains his new responsibilities in the school for recruits, directed by Evelio Laferté, with the purpose of training new guerrillas to carry out Fidel's future plans, which were first to participate in the counteroffensive against Batista's army and later what is usually referred to as the "invasion" of the eastern and western part of the country beyond the Sierra Maestra.
4. Evelio Laferté was captured in the battle of Pino del Agua, and decided to join the rebel ranks. Che, on Fidel's orders, began to organize the training school for new recruits, in addition to other responsibilities, and to prepare for Batista's expected offensive against the rebels.
5. A reference to the failed general strike called for April 9 by the leadership of the *llano* wing of the July 26 Movement based in Havana.
6. After the downfall of the Pérez Jiménez dictatorship in January 1958, Caracas (Venezuela) became an organizing center for revolutionaries.
7. Commander G[eneral] refers to Fidel, shortened to "C.G."
8. Justo Carillo was the organizer of the group that included army officers who opposed Batista.
9. The "*puros*" or "Pure Ones" were a group of dissident army officers who organized a revolt on April 4, 1956. The principal leaders were arrested and court-martialed.
10. Ramón Barquín López later became one of the United States' key leaders against the revolution.

11. An insurrectional movement emerged on September 5, 1957, in the city of Cienfuegos, Las Villas province.
12. Manuel Urrutia Lleó was a magistrate from the province of Oriente. He acted with integrity in the trial of the *Granma* expeditionaries. Named as president of the republic in January 1959, he resigned on July 17 the same year as he increasingly resisted the laws of the revolutionary government.

May 1958

1

We looked for a house where the group could stay and gave a little talk about their duties. We spent the day without doing anything.

2

This morning I received a note from Fidel in which he told me that the entire D.N. [Directorio Nacional, the national leadership of the July 26 Movement] was meeting and that Faustino [Pérez] and Daniel [René Ramos Latour] thought that I should be present. I walked there [Mompié], arriving at night.

3

The meeting took the entire day. Fidel stated the need to make some changes due to the failure [of the general strike].[1] Faustino believes that nobody in particular should be blamed for the failure, and Daniel feels the same. I made a brief analysis of the situation, noting the reality of two antagonistic political lines, that of the *sierra* and that of the *llano*, expressing the validity of the *sierra* policy and that we were right to fear the outcome of the strike. I summarized the reasons for the defeat of the strike, highlighting its *putschist* character, being based on the idea that an armed action would unleash the mass struggle. I expressed the opinion that those responsible for the failure were the leader of the workers, the main leader of the brigades and on the [movement] chief in Havana, that is, Mario, Daniel and Faustino,[2] and I said that they should resign. The entire day was spent in discussions, with everyone clarifying their positions and or doubts that others had in this regard.

During the evening Fidel stated the need to make the three changes I had suggested and Marcelo proposed a series of changes in the structure of the national leadership. In the end it was agreed that: Yeyé [Haydée Santamaría] would go to the United States to be in charge of supplying arms, that Ochoa would be chief [of the movement] in Havana and Aníbal[3] would become chief in Santiago. Faustino and Daniel were to join the troops [in the mountains] as commanders, and Mario would be the workers' delegate. Zoilo and Déborah would retain their posts, Ñico[4] would become the leader of the workers' section; the national leadership would move to the Sierra Maestra, where Fidel would occupy the post of general secretary [of the entire movement]. There would also be a secretariat of finances, political affairs and workers' affairs. In Santiago a delegation would be set

up for communication with the Sierra Maestra. The supply of weapons and everything concerning foreign relations would pertain to the general secretary. Everybody agreed except Faustino, who reacted stubbornly to the proposal for his transfer. Fidel is now also commander-in-chief of all the militias.[5]

4

This morning, while the recent agreements were being finalized, Faustino again protested his transfer, with Zoilo then presenting a motion that Faustino be left in Havana, with [Delio Gómez] Ochoa as his second-in-command. Fidel was inflexible in his decision. People were progressively leaving [Mompié] and heading toward their posts, some to dedicate themselves to new responsibilities.

5

On arriving back in Las Vegas I found that not everyone had left; Faustino and Déborah were still there. A plane had arrived from Raúl's [Castro Mercader] troop that took the pilots to Jamaica, announcing it would return in the evening. I sent a man to let Pedro Miret know urgently, and I went to Cayo Espino because there was the possibility it could land there, but it didn't. The recruits' school continues to be replenished with contingents coming from all over the area. I slept in Las Mercedes.

6

We left early with Ochoa, after I first talked with Lalo Roca[6] about the possibility of establishing a tax on sugar, with him checking out some plantation owners to try to impose $0.50 per sack as a contribution. After a rough trip we inspected the line of defense at La Derecha, under the command of Suñol,[7] who had to be replaced so he could defend Providencia. On our return we were informed that the army was going to go up to Estrada Palma, but there was no sign of anything on the way. Marcos and Cuevas were in good positions. As we reached Las Vegas at night we discovered that the army had occupied Roca and Álvarez's rice fields, and it seems that Pepito was taken by surprise and arrested.

7

The whole day went by without any news. Plans had to be changed for the departure of Déborah and Daniel [Ramos Latour] who still hadn't gone to their [new] posts.

8

A tour through the zones of Las Mercedes. The army landed in El Macho and probably Ocujal. Fidel sent a message to [General] Cantillo about the wife of a sergeant whose morality is reflected in the fact that she slept with a member of our troop and then insinuated that he could pass over onto the enemy side and that she had a lot of influence.

9

After a tempestuous night and morning I left for Santo Domingo, where I arrived at about 4:00 in the afternoon to talk with *el Guajiro* [Luis Crespo] about an extemporaneous decision he had made to leave the workshop because of an overly strong warning from Fidel. He was already in a good mood when I arrived. We returned together to Las Vegas, where we arrived around 11:00 to learn that Fidel had gone down and followed the trail to Las Mercedes, and that there would probably be a battle in La Plata. He left me orders to retreat to the lines of Blas [González] and Raúl [Castro Mercader], which I did. But on going to communicate the order to the former, I found that he was sick, his second-in-command was asleep in a house and everyone was sleeping soundly, with no one on watch. The new front line is becoming stronger in Jíbaro and Las Mercedes.

10

News arrived that the attack at La Plata had just been an airplane and frigate bombardment. We heard that a plane had been shot down there but this was not confirmed. During the night I went to check the positions. Nobody had done what they were supposed to: Raúl had dropped way behind, Sotomayor had not retreated sufficiently and Angelito [Verdecia] had remained in place. Fifteen men from the school had come and I assigned Joel's officer candidates to dig trenches. Fonso [Alfonso Zayas][8] had taken charge of Blas's troop until he recovered. We arrived very late at night.

11

We received a visit by Remigio Fernández, a rich but uncultured cattleman, who conversed at great length with me about diverse topics, apparently leaving convinced of the purity and justice of our intentions. Moisés, *el Maestro* ["the Teacher"],[9] arrived.

12

I took *el Maestro* Moisés to introduce him to the students, who now number 150. In the afternoon I had to air an accusation against a man called Walter, *jefecito* [little chief] of the Bayamo group who, operating on his own, committed a series of outrages that included killing two people. At night we

went to Las Mercedes with the intention of continuing further, but rain made this impossible.

13

We said goodbye to Remigio who left for Havana with the idea, according to him, of collecting large sums of money for the cause. We continued in the jeep to La Montería, and from there by mule to Crescencio's camp to discuss with him various matters, including the defense of the area and the problems that had arisen between *el Galleguito* [the little Spaniard] and Arsenio over questions of jurisdiction. I had the impression that the old man is sincere. He spoke to me of the problem of Bruno Acuña and his refusal to take on this matter for family reasons. He had no objection to *el Galleguito* being used as long as they took him off his hands.

We had thought of making a tour together but an urgent communiqué arrived from Fidel telling me to send him two 100lb bombs immediately because he had a plan with the aviator to bomb some areas. I was supposed to return immediately, but I couldn't do anything that day due to the rain. I brought with me Dr. Fernández, a young doctor who is going to replace del Valle,[10] who will go to join Camilo.

14

We left Las Mercedes, arriving without incident. We also spent the day with nothing new, except for messages received from Fidel.

15

Lidia[11] leaves. She is to make contact with some of our friends in Havana, Camagüey and Manzanillo. She has to explore the possibilities of opening a sea route from Santa Cruz del Sur, a route that has been open since the new doctor had arrived that way. Lidia was to leave by way of Cayo Espino, which was partially blocked by the Jibacoa Rural Guards. Sotomayor was left in charge of establishing the contact with the religious center that would get her out.

On our return we had a visit from Rafael,[12] an old acquaintance, who came with an ex-representative of the PSP [Popular Socialist Party]. They brought a proposal for a united front, despite the negative attitude of the D.N. [national leadership of the July 26 Movement] and its ramifications, and a call for joint work.

The points of unity are almost all acceptable to us from this most timid of political parties. We argued for a long time about a range of problems in

Havana and elsewhere. I wasn't quite convinced that the idea of unity would take root in the breast of the D.N.

16

Expecting that Fidel would arrive from his long journey touring the beach, we all waited, conversing at great length with an agronomist who had arrived from Camagüey with Luciano Medina. The agronomist, a sympathizer of [former President Carlos] Prío, made a call for unity on behalf of a number of people from different social classes in Camagüey. I asked them for some information about that province and about how agrarian reform might be carried out. At night we received notice of six people who had been poisoned with honey near Las Minas de Frío, and I had to go there to give them some basic treatment. By the time I arrived, however, they had already recovered.

17

I spent the day in the school seeing how things were going there. The new North American instructor [Herman Marks] is having good results.[13] There are now 160 students. I arrived in Las Vegas at night and had some conversations with the people who had just arrived there.

18

There has still been no message from Fidel, so I ordered everyone to go above. Before going up, I talked with Luis Pérez, a member of the action and sabotage section [of the July 26 Movement] from Havana, who has no political consciousness but who is also for unity. When they had already left, a counter-order came from
Fidel to send them to Mompié. In the afternoon I made a run to Marcos's positions, telling him that Horacio would be coming to take command.

19

I left at noon, arriving at nightfall with Masetti,[14] who came with the intention of doing another interview with Fidel, as he had heard that the [first] interview hadn't been broadcast. I arrived at night and worked out solutions to a range of problems.

20

The interview was conducted (no marvel), but when it was to be broadcast word came from Radio Continental of Caracas saying that the first one had been broadcast already in Argentina. The new one is therefore of no use, as it's the same as the first. The discussion with the other people is left until the following day.

21

Nothing can be done because it's been raining all day. The interview is postponed because Masetti can't leave, and it's not worthwhile trying to listen to anything. Luciano Medina and Solema left already, the latter with the mission of making contact in Havana with the OA,[15] who want to talk with us.

22

Masetti leaves, after having insisted in vain on getting a signed letter from Fidel to [President] Frondizi,[16] and we talked with Rafael and Lino, who stated the need for a union of all revolutionary forces. Fidel accepts this in principle, but has some doubts about the form it would take. Although the discussion hasn't finished, I will leave for Las Vegas. In these last few days we took charge of the radio equipment and there's been a great improvement in its quality. Fidel personally read a piece about the assassination of the Ecuadoran journalist Carlos Bastidas.[17]

23

Criticisms of the situation in the area under Crescencio's command continue. Fidel decides that I should go to take charge there.[18]

24

Nothing new.

25

Sorí calls for a meeting of peasants to exchange opinions about the possibility of carrying out the coffee harvest, which surprisingly involves 350 peasants. The executive committee, which includes Fidel, proposes the following measures: to create a type of Sierra currency to pay the workers; to bring the *yarey* [palm leaf fibers] and the sacks to pack them in; to create worker and consumer cooperatives; to create a commission to oversee the work and to provide troops to help pick the coffee. Everything was approved, but when Fidel was about to close the activity with a final speech, planes began to machine-gun the area around Las Mercedes and the people lost interest. We went to inspect the lines at dusk and found that Angelito had engaged in combat with the Rural Guards in La Herradura. Fidel decided that I should go there. I left at night, recommending that Angelito dig wells. According to him, there were about six to eight casualties. I don't know if that's true. We continued for a good part of the night and rested a bit in the early morning hours.

26

We continued the trip, hearing gunfire from early on. We reached Jíbaro, continuing afterwards to La Habanita where I arrived at night.

27

We left with Crescencio to carry out an inspection visit of his entire area in the northern zone. First I visited El Aguacate, changing the group en route to Cienaguilla. Afterwards we saw El Porvenir, where Mongo Marrero is, and last, Cujeyal [Copeyal], where *el Gallego* is. I went to sleep in Jíbaro, where I learned that Fonso had pulled back his lines without leaving a guard in front, which I made him do immediately. I ran into Lidia who told me that Havana was taken over by Faustino, who didn't want to relinquish his role there. Things look worse all the time.

28

We continued with Lidia to Las Vegas, after inspecting Gabino's lines, when I had the opportunity to see a tank shoot at peasant huts, which burned up on impact. A short time later we got news that two peasants had been wounded by grenade fragments.

29

The day passed with nothing new. Fidel announced his move to the Mompié house and he told me vaguely to leave, but I didn't understand him very well and I stayed where I was. Given the situation, Las Vegas is being evacuated.

30

I received an urgent message from Fidel that insisted that I come up without inspecting the advance lines in Las Vegas as I had planned to do. When I got there, I learned that a plane had arrived that brought [Carlos] Franqui[19] from Miami to take charge of propaganda, and 43 weapons, 11 Garands, 10 M-1s, a Johnson and 21 7.35 caliber Italian carbines that aren't any good, one of which arrived without a bolt. I immediately moved to the school, asking for 34 volunteers, for whom those guns were destined. I chose those who the teaching staff thought were the best, excluding any who had been punished. Geonel was promoted to captain and the Del Río brothers,[20] Joel Pardo and Emerio Reyes were promoted to lieutenants. Some undisciplined [rebel soldiers] were punished: one to spend 10 days without food, and another to go to Puerto Malanga.[21] Chile was excluded from the officer candidates because of his indiscipline. I returned to Mompié.

31

The recruits arrived and the 20 who were to stay near the school were given uniforms and backpacks; the others were given inferior weapons and no uniforms; two remained unarmed and one was sent back to the school for losing a piece when he tried to dismantle his weapon. Huber Matos went there, saw the school, and then went on to San Lorenzo to build fortifications. I went to sleep in Las Vegas. The school was attacked by the air force.

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1. The failure of the April 9 strike was discussed at this very tense meeting. In the account in *Reminiscences…* ("A Decisive Meeting"), Che explained in great detail what happened and what decisions were made, among which the most significant was the naming of Commander Fidel Castro as general secretary of the revolutionary forces of both the *sierra* and the *llano* wings of the July 26 Movement. There are letters preserved from Faustino Pérez that explain the impact that the measures taken had on him, such as one written to Aldo Santamaría on May 25, 1958, in which he stated: "I don't know how to tell you how much I've suffered since this failure [….] I'm leaving, I don't know what I can contribute up there [in the Sierra]. The impact of these recent tragic moments has broken my heart…." See in the appendices to this book a letter from Faustino Pérez to Armando Hart written in October 1958.
2. David Salvador (*Mario*), René Ramos Latour (*Daniel*) and Faustino Pérez.
3. Belarmino Castilla Más.
4. Antonio Torres Chedebeau.
5. From this date on consult Fidel Castro's *La Victoria Estratégica* for a detailed description of events.
6. Lalo Roca was a councillor from Manzanillo.
7. Eduardo Suñol Ricardo (*Eddy*) was a distinguished combatant who attained the rank of commander.
8. Alfonso Zayas (*Fonso*) was a distinguished combatant from Che's column. He later became an active member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and attained the rank of general.
9. Pablo Rivalta (*Moisés, el Maestro*) was a member of the Popular Socialist Party [PSP], in charge of political preparation of the recruits in training.

10. A reference to Oscar Fernández Mell and Sergio del Valle; the former was also part of Che's Ciro Redondo Invasion Column Eight, and the latter, part of the Antonio Maceo Invasion Column Two led by Camilo Cienfuegos.
11. Lidia Doce Sánchez was a messenger for Columns One and Four. She was tortured and assassinated on September 12, 1958. Che portrays her and her compañera Clodomira, who was also assassinated, in his *Reminiscences*… in the chapter "Lidia and Clodomira." A letter from Lidia to Che written in September 1958, just days before her death, is included in the appendices to this book.
12. Osvaldo Sánchez (*Rafael*) was a member of the national leadership of the PSP and occasionally sent to coordinate joint actions with the July 26 Movement.
13. Herman Marks was a North American incorporated into the Rebel Army and was the instructor at the recruits' school because of his experience in handling bazookas and in the Korean War. He was also a member of Che's Invasion Column Eight and was wounded in combat. He reached the rank of captain.
14. Jorge Ricardo Masetti was an Argentine journalist who after the revolution became the chief of Prensa Latina, an agency established on Che's initiative. He died in the struggle for the liberation of his country in 1964. As a result of the interviews he carried out in the Sierra Maestra in April and May of 1958, he published a book, titled *Los que luchan and los que lloran* [Those Who Struggle and Those Who Weep].
15. A reference to the Organización Auténtica [Authentic Organization], the military wing of the Cuban Revolutionary Party (Authentics) which was led by former President Carlos Prío.
16. Arturo Frondizi was president of Argentina at that time. After the triumph of the revolution Che had an interview with him in Buenos Aires, in August 1961, while he was participating in the conference of CIES (Interamerican Economic and Social Council) of the OAS, held in Punta del Este, Uruguay. See Ernesto Che Guevara, *Our America and Theirs* (Melbourne and New York: Ocean Press), 2003.
17. Carlos Bastidas was assassinated by Batista's repressive forces after interviewing Fidel Castro and others in the Sierra Maestra.
18. This was a critical period in Fidel's preparations first to confront and then counterattack against Batista's offensive against the rebels that began

May 25.

19. Carlos Franqui Mesa was a journalist and ex-member of the PSP from the 1940s. He joined the July 26 Movement and moved to the Sierra Maestra to take charge of Radio Rebelde and propaganda in general when Fidel ordered those media to be moved in the command headquarters under his control. Franqui abandoned the revolution in the 1960s.

20. Hugo, Ciro and Edilberto del Río were all members of the columns led by Che in the Sierra Maestra, in the westward “invasion” and in Las Villas.

21. There was a government prison called Puerto Boniato [a type of sweet potato] so the rebels called theirs “Puerto Malanga” [another kind of tuber vegetable].

June 1958

1

I went up to the school a little late, proceeding to make a double selection, nine volunteers, charged with throwing grenades, and 40 selected among the bad ones to help build fortifications, telling that group that those who wanted to could return home. Seven agreed to leave. We left with 31, as nine were barefoot, arriving at Gabiro at night. On the way we met up with Ernestina Otero,[1] a journalist who took some pictures of us.

2

In the morning a preliminary inspection was done to build fortifications. Afterwards I sent a couple of messages and waited for the answer in the house of Raúl [Castro Mercader], arriving at the school at night, where my house already had a roof.

3

Fidel arrived this morning to inspect the men and was generally satisfied with them. It was decided to take the machine gun away from Angelito Verdecia and organize a squadron led by R. [Rogelio] Acevedo, placing two new recruits as aides. One of the two recruits who had fled was taken prisoner. Fidel favored shooting him immediately but I was opposed to that, and finally it was agreed to hold him indefinitely in Puerto Malanga. There was another student whom I'd penalized with 10 days without food who appealed to Fidel for clemency; Fidel gave him the choice between lifting the fast and going to Puerto Malanga or to remain as he was. He couldn't decide on either so it was decided to send him to Puerto Malanga for a month.

4

Fidel left early for his camp and within an hour we were paid a visit by two missile-firing fighter planes, shooting off six of them and machine-gunning occasionally. The reaction among the students was negative, 10 of them asked to leave. Nine bomb throwers were selected, one of whom chickened out and another who sought a pretext to be excused. We looked for two volunteers to fill those spaces and two more to assist with the machine gun, and all of these posts were filled immediately. We left heading toward La Esmajagua, reaching Gabiro by nighttime. Acevedo was put in charge of the machine gun.

5

I inspected Raúl's very rudimentary trenches, trying to encourage the men to hurry and finish them. Angelito offered to carry out a mission to place a bomb on the road from Cerro to Estrada Palma, and I agreed to this. The trenches that Huber Matos[2] is preparing are good, despite the slow pace at which they are working, and they are laid out with a strategic sense.[2] Persistent rain delayed me, so it was night by the time I reached Jíbaro.

6

Fonso had prepared his trenches too far back. It was necessary to move them forward, trying to place the antitank trenches in strategic locations. He was given electric detonators. I had to send them to Fiallo because it was too late to go there. I made the men run from Cañizares to Jíbaro. When I arrived at the school I found that the planes passed overhead, provoking the flight of eight more [recruits]. Things are bad. I had to remove one of the new recruits I'd picked and put another in his place. It seems that Laferté isn't very brave when it comes to the planes and he creates panic among the others. It has been decided to fire the 30 [machine gun] at them if they come tomorrow.

7

It dawned cloudy, there were no problems with planes all morning. In the afternoon I leave for Las Vegas. Celia isn't there.

8

This afternoon I inspected Horacio's zone, agreeing with him to ambush the helicopter that passes close to the slope. To carry this out I put Cuevas's machine gun and his people to replace those of Horacio who were exhausted. Dr. Fajardo came from California, where he had gone to operate on one of our wounded, bringing back a very suspicious gringo[3] with some messages from people in Miami and some extravagant plans.

9

I went up to see Fidel this morning after an intense bombardment of the Santo Domingo-Naranjo-Gamboa zone. Fidel had been advised that the gringo was either FBI or had been contracted to kill him. He read me the most recent communiqués. There were good possibilities in Venezuela and Costa Rica. Laferté reported that a suspicious recruit had fled after having been denied permission to leave. I reached Las Minas at night to learn that the AWOL recruit had been detained in his sister's house. He defended himself saying that I had told him to go and he thought I meant to go home.

10

I asked Fidel about the AWOL soldier and he absolved him. I spoke to [the recruits] for a few minutes asking them to show more enthusiasm. For several hours intense machine-gun fire could be heard, apparently from the beach.

11

Fidel wrote me that there seemed to have been some kind of landing at the beach, asking me for seven guns and telling me that he was going to take charge of the defense of Las Vegas. He said that I should check out Crescencio's zone and the problem of Manuel Acuña, who had threatened to kill several people. This morning there was a small battle in Las Mercedes. I'm not absolutely sure of the details, but it ended with the withdrawal of the Rural Guards. It was a rainy day.

12

With the day so cloudy the danger of an attack by the air force, which has been very active in these days, disappeared. I went to Las Vegas where several trials were held. In the first, over which I presided, Walter Santiesteban Guerra, ex-lieutenant from the Bayamo militias, was given the death penalty after being found guilty of killing two individuals when he had command of a troop.

13

We left for La Habanita to resolve the matter of Acuña with the two men [Hidalgo and Ramírez] who had taken their accusations to Fidel. The air force was extremely active all morning, bombing the zones of Las Vegas and other areas we could not determine exactly. I found Crescencio ready to carry out all the necessary inquiries, so we agreed to go to Manuel's zone tomorrow. A problem came up with Remigio Fernández, a powerful cattleman from the zone, who had promised 20,000 pesos if we let him take out some of his cows but was now offering only 10,000. That was accepted, but he was only allowed to take out half the cattle.

14

It took all day to get to El Macho, where Acuña was, and we immediately began the investigation of the case, a task that took me until 12:00 at night. Crescencio had told me that he accepted my decision as fair and gave me full freedom to act on it.

15

Moving to El Macho, I completed the investigation, proving that Acuña had made a direct threat with a knife, although his attitude wasn't manifestly

aggressive, the personal animosity between him and Hidalgo, which is really intriguing to me, the unruly attitude of Manolo Ramírez (the insubordinate lieutenant), Manuel Acuña's neglect of the troops, the lack of responsibility by the men (the three lieutenants), leaving their posts at a time of danger to go and attend to some bureaucratic affairs.[4] I wrote this all down in the report and relieved Acuña of his command of the troop, putting M. Ramírez at the disposition of the C.J. [Council of Justice], leaving Padio as interim chief and Hidalgo as his aide in terms of the trenches, the ones that were there weren't worth shit. We continued the trip as far as Magdalena, where Crescencio went to visit his family, and I continued up the river, reaching El Jigüe at night. I was unable to continue because the horses were exhausted and mine fell over some rocks and injured a leg.

16

We set out early, arriving at Fidel's place in Mompié. I had to decipher a long paragraph in code, most of which was a denunciation against another group, but it also said that a big shipment of arms had arrived and they had a plane to bring them. Willi, the pilot, should have left before dawn this morning with a range of instructions. Fidel gave me the order to stay in Las Minas and said he approved of my handling of the Acuña case. I spent the whole day there. There were a couple of small battles in El Jigüe.

17

I left early but, nevertheless, on my way I was caught by a bombardment that hit the school fairly heavily. They also dropped bombs on Las Vegas. Fidel asked me for two of the men here in the zone of Esmajagua to cover the other side of Santo Domingo, from where disturbing news is arriving about Sánchez Mosquera's troops, who are coming in our direction.

Shortly before arriving I met up with Teté,[5] who came quickly to advise us that Lara has been wounded. Dr. La O.[6] heads off and I arrive shortly afterwards. Lara's wound is pretty serious, the doctor has given him first aid and he is taken to the hospital. I sleep in La Auditoría.

18

This morning the air force handed out their daily ration of bullets near La Auditoría, in Las Vegas itself. I continue on to Las Minas where I find messages from Fidel asking for more people. I rapidly send what he requested: Geonel with four men and five automatic weapons plus what we

can spare from our defense here. The reports about the advance toward Santo Domingo are true.

19

A note arrives from Fidel asking for the last seven men. I don't send them to him right away, advising him that Horacio abandoned his post and is on El Desayuno Hill, leaving El Purgatorio open to the advance of the troops.[7] I wait until nighttime for some message but nothing arrives. I speak with the officer-candidates and explain the situation to them and the need for their cooperation if we have to go back to the old system of columns.

20

A note arrives from Horacio, complaining and saying that he will have to die because he has a bad leg and can't retreat. I try to cover Horacio's left flank a little, because at the first attack on that side he threatens to retreat. However, the few poorly armed men that I could get there took the wrong road. I had to set them right and this took the whole morning. When I calmly headed toward Las Vegas to confer with Horacio, a message came from Sorí indicating that he had withdrawn to the other side of the village and not a living being remained in Las Vegas. A visual inspection from the slope above indicated to me that guardsmen were present in the homes of Ángel Vázquez and Fidel Mendoza. I write a bitter note to Fidel, awaiting his reply.[8]

21

This comes in the early morning hours and I give the pertinent orders,[9] sending someone to find Fiallo and in general mobilizing all of Crecencio's people to come here. Fonso's men go to cover Gabiro's zone, while Angelito and Raúl [Castro Mercader] come here. Raúl had arrived last night at my call and continued with me, taking control of the other trail that goes up to Las Vegas, behind Las Minas de Frío, while Angelito covered the principal point with a squadron of *escopeteros* [scouts] and a scope.

I spoke with Fidel who gave me instructions to place a 100 lb. mine in the house of Antonio, *el Gallego*, and let the guardsmen go inside and then blow it up. He also agreed to replace Horacio as head of the platoon and to take the guns away from several of them, including Horacio himself. *El Guajiro* will replace him. He said he would come the same night but didn't. I reached Antonio's house with the bomb to wait for him to coordinate plans.[10]

22

The positions were perfectly visible from Las Vegas and the men climbed up and down with an awesome calmness. It seemed like an army of heroes, but the fantastic retreat indicates that that's just the result of the lack of responsibility. *El Guajiro* arrives and we go down to coordinate plans. I made the first line withdraw some 200 meters and also the right wing that is now under the command of Fajardo, as Montero has been replaced and disarmed because of the retreat, along with Horacio[11] and the four from Lara's group who ran. We decide to place the bomb in the home of *el Gallego* Antonio, so that the first serious resistance will be below, leaving the house free so they can go inside. I had to leave at night to avoid being seen and stay in the Mompié house because of an asthma attack and flu.

23

After speaking with Fidel the defense system was established with Fiallo, who arrived with 18 men as a reserve, and we studied the possibilities of attacking the rearguard. I visited Raúl, indicating that he should go lower to protect *el Guajiro's* left flank adequately. I realize there is a slope without defenses, but there are no men available to close that point, so it will be necessary to change how some of our forces are distributed.

24

In the early morning hours I went to check on Angelito and Daniel's positions, later continuing on to Jíbaro, where I gave final instructions to Fonso and withdrew Angelito Frías to Montería, giving them orders to look for supplies in a place they know near Manzanillo. Tonight I disarmed eight of Angelito's men who had been insubordinate and removed Daniel from his post.

25

The day passed calmly, there were just two small changes to improve the positions, sending Daniel to La Vela Hill and six of Fiallo's men to a slope that's between El Purgatorio and La Esmajagua. Twenty-one of Crescencio's men arrived at night. Celia informed me that on the Caguara slope Pedrito hadn't found the men who should have been there; I told Celia that Fidel was really disgusted with Pedro and René because they hadn't lived up to expectations.[12]

26

I went to Mompié, where Fidel spoke with me and ordered me to stay here. I then went in the direction of the heights of Caguara but my animal tired out on the way, so I stayed in the home of Santos Pérez while the messenger

tried to make contact. I found Lino very influenced by the defeatist environment that reigns here. He passed on a series of peasant demands that are okay, but I don't know if Fidel will be able to act on them right now. At night a messenger arrived with a message from [Fernando] Chávez, "the artist," who informed me that Rural Guards were in El Jigüe and in Caguara, and that none of our people were there. I returned, informing Fidel, who gave orders to move the reserves in that direction, and if the guardsmen advanced by Naranjal to push them back, taking them by surprise.

27

"The artist" appeared when I had just sent Fiallo to reinforce Caguara and establish contact with Padio. "The artist" told me a very artistic tale about a nocturnal attack on the camp where the Rural Guards were, from which I had the impression that he'd used up a lot of bullets without any significant results. At night there were three desertions and one of them was a double blow: Rosabal, who had been condemned to death as a snitch, Pedro Guerra from Sorí's squadron and two military prisoners. Pedro Guerra was recaptured; he had stolen a revolver for his flight and was executed immediately. Later Fidel came to the conclusion that "the artist" was not the best person for the position of zone chief, and sent me to give the counter-order to Fiallo for him not to return and assume leadership of the zone. I did this, but figuring that the men wouldn't be able to arrive until just before dawn, Fidel sent me a squadron led by Daniel (a commander), all with automatic weapons. The Rural Guards have climbed to the slope of La Victoria and taken Taita José. I went at night to see *el Guajiro*, who told me that he had seen five guardsmen watching from the slope. The Guards saw our people too. I gave the necessary orders and went to sleep right there, returning to Mompié just before dawn.

28

The day passed with nothing new here, as the Rural Guards only seized a cow. Fiallo didn't receive the note and arrived here with half of the men having been sent to Caguara with the mission of detaining the army at that point, taking charge of the defense. Part of the reserves stayed here. From midday you could hear the rumble of the mortars. In the afternoon Fidel advises me that an intense battle is shaping up in Santo Domingo.[13] At 4:00 Daniel heads over there, the night is tense, the news keeps coming.

29

At dawn the panorama becomes clearer. The first reports talk of 30 weapons captured, including a tripod and several Cristobal [carbines], later some 50-60 weapons are added to the picture, a mortar with its grenades, the tripod, a short-wave radio, 60 backpacks, cartridge belts, bullets, etc. This morning 21 prisoners were captured, many of them wounded, along with their weapons in a cave. The interrogation revealed that they belonged to a company sent to aid Sánchez Mosquera, who ordered a major to continue advancing and to make camp farther away, at a place where he was surprised by Lalo and a squadron of Camilo's men; the battle spread out, with Huber Matos, Duque, Geonel, Cuevas, etc. intervening. Camilo was sent to cover the retreat of the guardsmen, and by the afternoon a loud explosion was heard accompanied by gunfire. At night Camilo's report arrived saying that they had 11 guns, that they had seen about eight dead and they had one prisoner, and that they had retreated because the Rural Guards had taken over the slope. Along with Duque, who had been guarding their rear, Fidel ordered them to go higher up the Sierra Maestra.

30

This morning we heard gunfire on the Las Minas side and some isolated shooting coming from Santo Domingo. Tonight I went to see Fidel and proposed that he send a letter to Finalé,[14] an army major whose former lover is with us; he thought it was a good idea. I slept there. It was reported that Orlando Pupo had held back the Rural Guards, causing them four casualties.

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1. Ernestina Otero was a journalist sent by *Bohemia* magazine to do a story on Fidel Castro on May 25, 1958, in Las Vegas de Jibacoa before Batista's offensive.

2. The role Huber Matos played is explained by Fidel in *La Victoria Estratégica*, writing, Matos "was a captain because he had distinguished himself in the construction of trenches. He had arrived in the Sierra in the plane that brought [Pedro] Miret and other worthy compañeros […]. He was only in the Sierra Maestra for a few months. Later, he turned out to be ambitious and a traitor, who used anticommunist tricks to sow plots." p. 120

3. Allan Robert Nye, a US government intelligence agent, who had come with the mission to kill Fidel in the Sierra Maestra.

4. Sic.

5. Delsa Pueblo (Teté) was second-in-command of the Mariana Grajales platoon, a women's brigade under the command of Fidel. She is currently a general in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.
6. Vicente de La O. was the doctor in Che's column.
7. In *La Victoria Estratégica*, Fidel writes: "From a message Che sent me at 2:10 in the afternoon, I confirmed that in his retreat, Horacio had left the entire zone of El Mango [open]. […] This meant that the enemy could pass through with no impediment whatsoever, precisely in the zone where resistance would have been most effective." p. 110.
8. The message Che sent to Fidel stated: "Today, as has occurred only a few times in this revolution, I've received such an exasperating blow as this. […] I should tell you that in these two days no shots have been fired. Your order to save bullets has been fulfilled." Cited by Fidel Castro in *La Victoria Estratégica*, p. 113.
9. The orders from Fidel were: "Communicate to Che my order to investigate what happened, disarm everyone who engaged in this act of cowardice and send young men from the school to take over those guns." Cited in *La Victoria Estratégica*, p. 113.
10. The actions carried out by Che are summarized by Fidel in *La Victoria Estratégica*: "…my intention was always that Che would be in charge, if the circumstances required it, of the defense of the westernmost sector of our front.[…] I must say that during those weeks of preparation for the defense of our territory, in preparation for Batista's offensive and during its development up to this moment, Che has functioned, in fact, as second-in-command of the front." p. 115.
11. Horacio was replaced by *el Guajiro* Luis Crespo in the command of the people at Las Minas del Infierno. Later in the revolutionary war, Horacio Rodríguez showed signs of courage and qualities as a guerrilla chief. He died in combat the day after the triumph of the revolution while pursuing various thugs of the Batista dictatorship who were fleeing from justice.
12. These events are described by Fidel in *La Victoria Estratégica:* "The Guards encountered no resistance until they arrived at Boca de Manacas, where a little after midday they fell into a rebel ambush. There was a brief battle with the surprising result that our forces retreated to Jigüe and left the path open to the enemy. […]. You can easily understand the disappointment I felt on receiving the first reports of that event […]. That night I arranged

to relieve Pedrito and René [Rodríguez] of personal command of La Plata River." pp.149-50.

13. The first battle of Santo Domingo had already begun.

14. Armando González Finalé was the chief of Batista's 23rd Battalion, situated in Arroyones. Che's message was sent to Captain Carlos Durán Batista, head of the troop located in Las Vegas: "I have in my hands a communiqué from commander Finalé inviting me to confer with him. You know that tomorrow will be too late for that and I am trying to avoid bloodshed." Cited by Fidel in *La Victoria Estratégica*, p. 301.

July 1958

1

Heavy firefighting is heard coming from Gabiro all day. I send Ciro del Río with his squadron there and ask for reports, which arrive at night indicating that the heights of San Lorenzo in the Sierra Maestra have been lost. The letter for Finalé is written.

2

I leave for Las Minas de Frío with a reinforcement of six men to place on the Meriño heights. I station them with Mario and go to review the points on the Sierra Maestra, near San Lorenzo, when I'm advised that the Rural Guards are climbing to Meriño. I have to return rapidly without being able to review Fonso's position, whose group and that of César Suárez were the ones that I had most doubts about. I ordered an immediate exploration, but there was nothing there. It was all a false alarm.

3

I went out early to review the position on Meriño, but when I got there I found that the Rural Guards were already advancing. We got tangled up in a little skirmish that we withdrew from very quickly. The position was bad and they were surrounding us, but we put up little resistance. I personally noted something I'd never felt before: the desire to stay alive. This must be corrected at the next opportunity. On the other hand, Angelito Verdecia, who had gone down further toward Las Vegas, reported a battle in which he wounded two and took one prisoner with his weapon, which was handed over. By nightfall the report arrived from Fajardo indicating that Fidel was coming toward El Roble, which has still not been taken by the guardsmen. He arrived in the pre-dawn hours.

4

Fidel spent the day organizing the men in El Roble; the Rural Guards did not move. Cuevas will be in charge of opening fire, two squads will be on his right flank and I will be on his left; Cordoví will attack to break up the column and Ciro will go behind them. Fidel reached Las Minas by night and we went to sleep there.

5

The planes were active all day; this morning they bombed Las Minas, this afternoon La Plata. News arrived from Paz,[1] saying that he had an encounter in which he caused the army four casualties, remaining master of the field and capturing a Springfield.[2] At night a report arrived from Fonso

indicating that the soldiers had advanced, forcing him to retreat. By dawn the impression was confirmed that they retreated for lack of decision, as the attack simply became bursts of machine-gun fire.

6

We spent a rainy day waiting, without them moving from their positions. Acevedo's 30 men arrived and dug trenches.

7

Another rainy day and a fruitless ambush. The 50 arrived and are sent off to look for the mortar.

8

The soldiers were seen early harnessing the mules. The pertinent warnings were given, and when they unexpectedly took off for Meriño, we fell in behind them. I sent Ciro del Río to take a slope on one flank while I advanced on the other. In a little while Lalo's first ambush on Meriño worked perfectly, and later another group on the road to Limones pushed them back completely.

I tried to make contact with Lalo but Miguel came back saying that he couldn't find him. The air force had machine-gunned heavily, so I thought that was probably true. This impression was enhanced by the fact that the Rural Guards advanced on the ambush almost without firing a shot and kept advancing. In a while the mules arrived and the mortar caused confusion among them. I decided to advance independently from the others and shoot at the mules, which I did. It was later seen that they withdrew and we advanced along the slope, encountering seven mules, one of them was okay for riding. There were two dead and two wounded (mules) that we left there.

When we returned we heard that Lalo was [where he was supposed to be]. But I didn't believe it. Fidel advanced and we conferred. I thought there hadn't been any guardsmen on the slope, but Fidel thought there were. Then Cuevas affirmed that he had been shot at from above, which removed all doubt.

9

Lalo occupied the entire slope and fell behind the soldiers who lost all their mules in the retreat. Thirty-nine mules, cooking utensils, food, 97 backpacks, a pistol, 1,000 30.06 bullets, 500 M-1s were our booty. Fidel quickly decided to go and attack El Jigüe and mobilized the men to take that route, deciding to leave me in Mompié. In Santo Domingo Sánchez

Mosquera's column was forced to retreat after one of his men was killed and his weapon seized.

10

I remained in Las Minas organizing the resistance that must be centralized in the spot where Raúl Castro [Mercader] remains the chief.

11

On arriving at Mompié a tremendous bombardment broke out that included napalm bombs, from which we collected an unexploded shell. I came with one of the auditors from Raúl's column, who brought along a manifesto to the whole world he had signed. It was too strong and, after the arrest of the 49 North Americans, it seemed to adopt a tone of dangerous "extremism."[3] A dispatch arrived from Fidel in which he announced the first skirmish which left the army with five dead, one gravely wounded and one soldier taken prisoner along with his weapons. At night the mortar shots could be heard, and within an hour I was advised that Geonel Rodríguez was seriously wounded by a mortar that fell on the house where he was cooking; it also killed the owner of the house.

12

At dawn we received word of Geonel's death after an extremely long operation. [He was] one of the most beloved collaborators, a true revolutionary.[4] The farewell to him was read by Camilo over our radio. Fidel continues accumulating men and gave orders for Ramiro and Almeida's column to move everything here. No news yet about the plane bringing weapons. The recruits are waiting in Palma Mocha.

13

The El Jigüe troops are still silent. Raúl sends word that they are climbing up via Meriño, so I tell him to send Angelito, who is resting in Las Minas, to cover the hill. It seems that there was a mistake on the part of Angelito (or the guide) because they fell into an ambush in which Angelito was killed and his weapon was lost.[5] It hasn't been clarified who was to blame as the guide hasn't shown up. The order was given to evacuate Las Minas and withdraw the ambushes on the way there, sending Ciro [del Río] to occupy El Roble Road.

A telegram arrived tonight from the International Red Cross asking for wounded prisoners to be turned over without conditions, but in the area around Bayamo; if taken literally this will be difficult to do so by the requested date of July 15. I asked for this to be clarified. There were also

various requests, such as a declaration of unity, that Matthews' questionnaire be answered, why haven't all of the North Americans been released, what's going on with Virelles in Venezuela, etc. There is news of the plane that was unable to take off and some minor things. I also hear a report of the death of Carlitos Mas, old-young combatant who died as the result of burns and fractures suffered [in the same attack that wounded] Geonel.

14

News comes from Las Minas indicating that the soldiers are advancing along the Moro slope, so I call on the telephone for reinforcements to be sent. But they soon tell me that Ciro, who was going to bring reinforcements, had withdrawn and that the Rural Guards were encircling Las Minas, which has already been evacuated except for the pigs. I initiate a march there, finding the last of the recruits in retreat, with the telephone that I had installed at the edge of the woods in a place called El Pino that falls away into the valley of Las Vegas. I reached the foot of the hill that overlooks Las Minas hearing only isolated shots very far away. I had the telephone line taken up, except a piece that couldn't be done at night. The situation seems very delicate, as Fonso, César Suárez, Angelito [Frías], Roberto [Fajardo] and Orlando [Pupo] would remain isolated; however, all of those people had regrouped and the only ones missing were Angelito Verdecia's men, now commanded by Silva. At nightfall the news arrived from Silva indicating that he was still on El Moro Hill and that the soldiers were a short distance away. Two army men had been killed. I ordered that everyone retake their old positions, that Orlando reinforce Silva on the hill and that Ciro take the other slope. All this had to be done during the night. News came from El Jigüe that they had repelled a column that was trying to leave, taking 32 mules and four men with their weapons. I write explaining the situation to them and expressing the hope of detaining them there.

15

The firefight started early. At 10:00 Orlando had already withdrawn and Ciro's people were spread out due to an unfortunate error by Orlando, who failed to advise his men of the reinforcements that were coming from the other slope. As a result Ciro was wounded in the lung, although it doesn't seem to be too serious. Orlando failed to carry out my order about where the mine was to be placed and he retreated too early, in my opinion. I tried to take two hills that overlook Las Minas, but the men had already retreated

completely and the lines had to be held some 200 meters from Mario's house. They [the enemy] were allowed to arrive and gather there [while we] simultaneously opened fire along the whole line. Very conservative estimates indicate three confirmed casualties. Roberto withdrew too soon compromising the success of the operation. For tomorrow I have distributed everyone, putting in the first line Roberto and Raúl, who, when they retreated, left the field to César and Silva and occupied a line farther back. Fonso will cover the flank. Angelito Frías and Manolito, in charge of Ciro's squadron, will take care of the road from Magdalena. In all of yesterday's actions the only ones wounded were the guy who had an accident and Pompeyo Pena, [who was wounded] in the foot. News arrived from Fidel indicating that they've taken 19 prisoners and 18 weapons and bazooka shells, and that it's possible that [the enemy] will surrender in 48 hours.

16

A completely peaceful day on this front. The soldiers are spending their time digging trenches in the Sierra Maestra. The lines are organized. The planes are active in the zone of Santo Domingo and El Jigüe. Fidel is saying that they have taken three more prisoners; he also said that messages had already been transmitted from him to Commander Quevedo, a fellow student from the university, from Dr. Vallejo to another doctor friend of his, and from a prisoner to his compañeros [to pressure them into surrendering]. Wrong instructions were given to the planes so that they bombed their own zones. At 12 noon a truce was announced in order to address the soldiers, but when they were gathered to listen, some isolated sharpshooters (ours) started shooting, causing them to disperse. A reinforcement squadron that had been requested from Almeida arrived, one that he had in reserve. Fidel sent instructions for Almeida to send some of his men from Palma Mocha Hill to the slope that goes down to Naranjal.

17

In this zone the tranquility was absolute, but in Mompié—apparently due to a betrayal—there was extensive bombing, even the hospital was hit and the wounded had to be transferred to a zone near Camilo. The International Red Cross announced that the handing over [of prisoners] to Batista's army should take place in Casa de Piedra.

During the night they woke me to tell me that Fidel had sent news that reinforcements of the Rural Guards had arrived; but we already knew this because we had overheard a message from the little plane, but we hadn't

believed it because of the sketchy report that said there had been 12 killed, 21 prisoners and 33 weapons captured. Still missing is the report from Paz.

18

Nothing new in the zone. The Rural Guards' only pastime is killing the pigs we had left wandering about. Fidel gives a report that the booty is now 66 weapons, 42 prisoners, and 18,000 bullets. The Red Cross message was rejected in the form that it was proposed by the army, that is, turning over [the prisoners] at Casa de Piedra, and a [counter] proposal was given to the International Red Cross delegate for this to occur on July 22 in Las Vegas. Mompié was bombed again.

19

The day was calm on all fronts in terms of reports and shots from light weapons, the planes enjoyed themselves shooting in El Jigüe. The rain was persistent.

20

De la O. called at dawn to advise us that a reinforcement at the beach had been destroyed, but that Cuevas[6] had died in the battle. The day passed in absolute calm; all we heard was that the Red Cross had accepted Las Vegas as the place to turn over the wounded prisoners and had asked for confirmation of the time.

At dusk the long-awaited news arrived of the surrender of the soldiers led by Quevedo. There were a little more than a hundred, according to what we've been able to learn. There have been five deaths among our men: Cuevas and Banderas are the ones that I know about.[7] There were two seriously wounded and two others. Everything remains calm. I immediately sent out to look for those men without arms on the list I had, and we began the march to the house in Mompié from where the others continued to the Sierra Maestra store. We spent our time waiting for news. Unity outside seems to be going well but the [Popular] Socialist Party isn't included [in the unity call], which surprises me.

21

I haven't been able to communicate with Fidel all day despite the continuous messages I've tried to send him. The latest news indicates he has moved to Naranjal, probably to distribute weapons, and that's where I sent the messenger. The first delivery of prisoners to the International Red Cross is set for tomorrow, and I haven't received a word from Fidel. Teté

will be in charge of taking the message to the lines of the army in Las Vegas.

22

The uncertainty continued until mid-morning, when Fidel spoke. Teté had left for Las Vegas with a message. The response was very courteous but announced that the International Red Cross had not shown up, offering nevertheless to receive any seriously wounded before the scheduled hour. A communication arrived by radio from the Red Cross indicating that it could only get there tomorrow. Meanwhile, prisoners continued arriving at the Mompié house; they are hungry and cold. All the battalion officers who have surrendered—except their commander, who will remain a prisoner—were there. At night three gravely injured arrived, and we alerted Captain Durán of Las Vegas that they would be sent to him. I left to have a talk with Fidel and, before sending the men off, I had already received a communication from the aforementioned captain indicating that he would receive them in the morning because he considered nighttime movement dangerous. During the night one of the three wounded died.

23

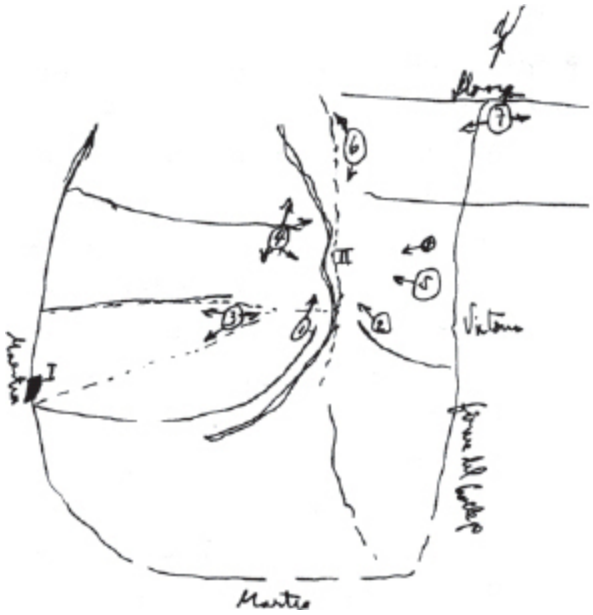
I was somewhat delayed in returning, reaching Mompié a little after 2:00 at the same time that a message arrived from the members of the International Red Cross asking that I go. Franqui and Faustino were already there. I conferred with the representatives sent by the Red Cross, who offered their help in getting medicines for us and asked me to write a letter to the committee asking for this and the recognition of one of our delegations in Caracas. We turned over 216 prisoners and announced more for tomorrow. Captain Durán went to greet me and showed himself to be very easy to get along with.[8]

24

It was a day of continually contradictory orders. The remaining soldiers, something around 29, were turned over at 4:00 in the afternoon. Orders were given to all the men to head down the mountain because the truce would end at 6:00. Raúl [Castro Mercader] will stay in the Sierra Maestra with his people and Fonso, while all the rest will go to Las Vegas, supported by 30 of Camilo’s men, who will be in an intermediary position from which to attack Las Vegas or the reinforcements arriving from Santo Domingo.

Everything went badly because the men didn’t follow orders and remained half way or something like that because we couldn’t find them.

The messenger, who should have made contact with Camilo, didn't bother to wake me and slept peacefully. The International Red Cross signed the certificate that the prisoners had been handed over, signed by the delegate of the Cuban Red Cross. Santo Domingo is completely surrounded as of today and there's talk of troops coming up from Estrada Palma. The plan of attack on Las Vegas is as follows:



I = Minas de Frío
II = Las Vegas
1= *El Guajiro* 8
2 = Manuel[9] 6
3 = Silva 15
4 = Joel 18
5 = Me 18
6 = Laferté 20
7[10] = Camilo 30

Dotted lines = roads
---Double = Jibacoa River
Arrows = direction of our forces

25

The day began slowly; it was only around noon that I could give final instructions to the group leaders and each one left to take his position. Captain César Suárez hadn't shown up because "it was raining a lot." Joel, *el Guajiro* [Luis Crespo] and Silva took their own initiative. At night we left the home of *el Gallego* so we wouldn't be seen by the army. We quickly

met up with Camilo, but there was a group that had dropped behind, and we learned later that Laferté had been badly hurt and could not walk, significantly delaying the return march. I had to improvise by having one of the aides man the bazooka and left the troop under the command of César Suárez, in whom I have no confidence as captain. Since then, 12 shots of all kinds have been heard coming from the direction of Santo Domingo and the air force has been active.

26

This morning we explored the area, already having decided on the places where the people will be posted, but they haven't been moved there yet because César Suárez advised that he couldn't reach the spot because he "has seven barefoot men." If the one assigned to open fire isn't in his position, there's no need for the others to be there. I sent Manuel to another hill that's closer, Fajardo will have the second under his command, and Lázaro the third; Angelito will go with me between the second and third. The other side of the river has been abandoned. Camilo is in his position. Firefights and mortar shots have been heard all morning. A P-47 machine-gunned the area of Santo Domingo. The radio broadcast news of various battles; in one of them it was reported that Manuel Acuña had been killed. Yesterday's results are: (for the army) 24 prisoners, three dead, 25 guns, one bazooka; on our side, two slightly wounded.

27

The day is spent in preparations. In Santo Domingo almost no fighting is heard. A message is intercepted reporting that a major was killed and Sánchez Mosquera was gravely wounded in the head. Everything is ready to begin combat but not a shot has been fired yet.

28

This morning a communiqué arrived from *el Guajiro* advising us that two women had said that the captain stated that he was surrounded and that he didn't want to fight; if the rebels withdrew, he said, they would leave. I sent a message to Fidel asking if he wanted us to cut them down. Before receiving an answer, another message came from César Suárez indicating that Finalé[11] wanted to talk to me, according to him, to avoid bloodshed because tomorrow the troop was going to be withdrawn from Las Vegas along with tanks and planes. So then I sent a note to Captain Durán Batista inviting him to confer in Bismark's house.[12] Guillermo Morales took the message but the response was negative. I sent a second message telling him

what Finalé said and warning him to surrender—or rather, to go, leaving his weapons. He refused to answer, saying tomorrow would bring the response. When we left, a localized battle began at Mango Hill, with bombs and other powerful weapons. At nightfall the results of the battle were still not known.

29

I was advised early that the men commissioned by the captain were coming and were in Bismark's house. I went down a short distance to meet them. They were Lieutenant Soto, second-in-command of the company, and a first-class sergeant. They told me that they didn't want to leave their weapons but offered to leave us enough food for a regiment. I told them that it was impossible given the number of men they had and that they had withdrawn from Las Minas de Frío and San Lorenzo. They told me that a tank had passed by yesterday and more were coming today. We climbed up and had barely arrived when the sentry informed us that the army was on the move with a white flag and another of the Red Cross; I ordered [my men] to open fire and a brief shoot-out began. We quickly went down and encountered squads that hadn't fired because they saw the Red Cross flag. I took Angelito Frías's squadron and some men from other squads to pursue the Rural Guards. What we saw was a wanton spectacle of defeat: backpacks and helmets strewn all along the trail, pouches with bullets and all kinds of equipment, even a jeep and a tank that was intact.

We continued advancing and at the first shots we encountered three civilians wounded by wild mortar fire by the guardsmen from Arroyones. Later we captured the first prisoners, among them one of the company's doctors. We were shot at, too, but by our people who were confused. We continued advancing and took a group that surrendered in a jeep. There another bad mistake occurred and our people killed a guardsman and seriously wounded one of the other two men who were accompanying me, Lieutenant Ángel Frías.

By now we had 60 prisoners, among them the tank captain, [Gómez] Oquendo, and I was in the uncomfortable situation of being besieged by our own forces, who opened fire when they could scarcely see a helmet move. I sent a soldier to tell them to cease fire with hands in the air and at one point that worked, but then they kept firing for a while, wounding two more guardsmen. Finally things calmed down a little and the line of Rural Guards

was put in motion toward Las Vegas. We weren't able to capture either the captain who commanded the company or his second-in-charge.

Yesterday's action, in which the reinforcements were detained, cost the Rural Guards two deaths and some wounded, as well as some weapons. While I was thinking of grabbing the tank, a note came from Captain Vega indicating that the Rural Guards of Arroyones were in talks to surrender, but that they wanted us to show them a prisoner from Las Vegas. I had to leave everything to take Oquendo to talk with them, without any result. When I returned I found a message from Fidel calling me urgently, telling me, among other things, that the Rural Guards had left Santo Domingo and that Paz had been killed.

30

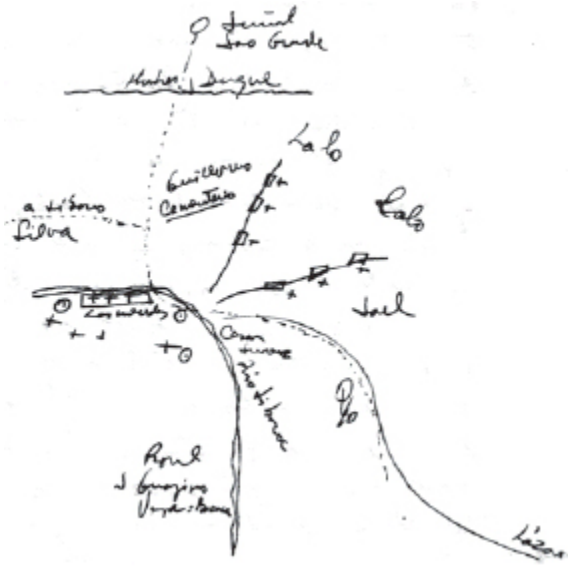
I reached Llorona Hill as the sun was rising, but Fidel hadn't been able to wait for me because he had to prepare an attack at Arroyones before 6:00. I had a snooze, expecting to hear mortar fire, but heard none. I assumed the Arroyones operation was finished and sent the men to look for fugitives, with the result that at noon they brought in the captain and a second lieutenant as prisoners. There's still a first lieutenant and some soldiers missing.

Toward the end of the day I was informed that an intense gunfight was heard on the way to Arroyones. I left Angelito Frías's squadron and went with all the men to that zone, but when we reached El Jigüe I found that there was nothing in Arroyones. No soldiers were seen in Las Mercedes, but some people said they had seen them there. At that point a message arrived asking for a doctor because Daniel was badly wounded. I sent a message to Las Vegas and went as fast as I could with everything I had at hand only to find a corpse on my arrival. Daniel had died from a mortar wound in his belly, 10 centimeters deep, but he could have been saved if he had had immediate medical attention.

The Arroyones ambush had been marred by several serious errors but the result was 16 dead soldiers and others gravely wounded by a mine. The men had hurried off to look for guardsmen and a mortar shot hit Daniel; there was a moment of confusion and he was left alone with his small group, wounded, suffering greatly until his death a few hours later. René Ramos [Daniel] and I were political enemies with profound ideological differences separating us, but he knew how to die fulfilling his duty on the front line. And when one dies in that way it's because one feels an inner

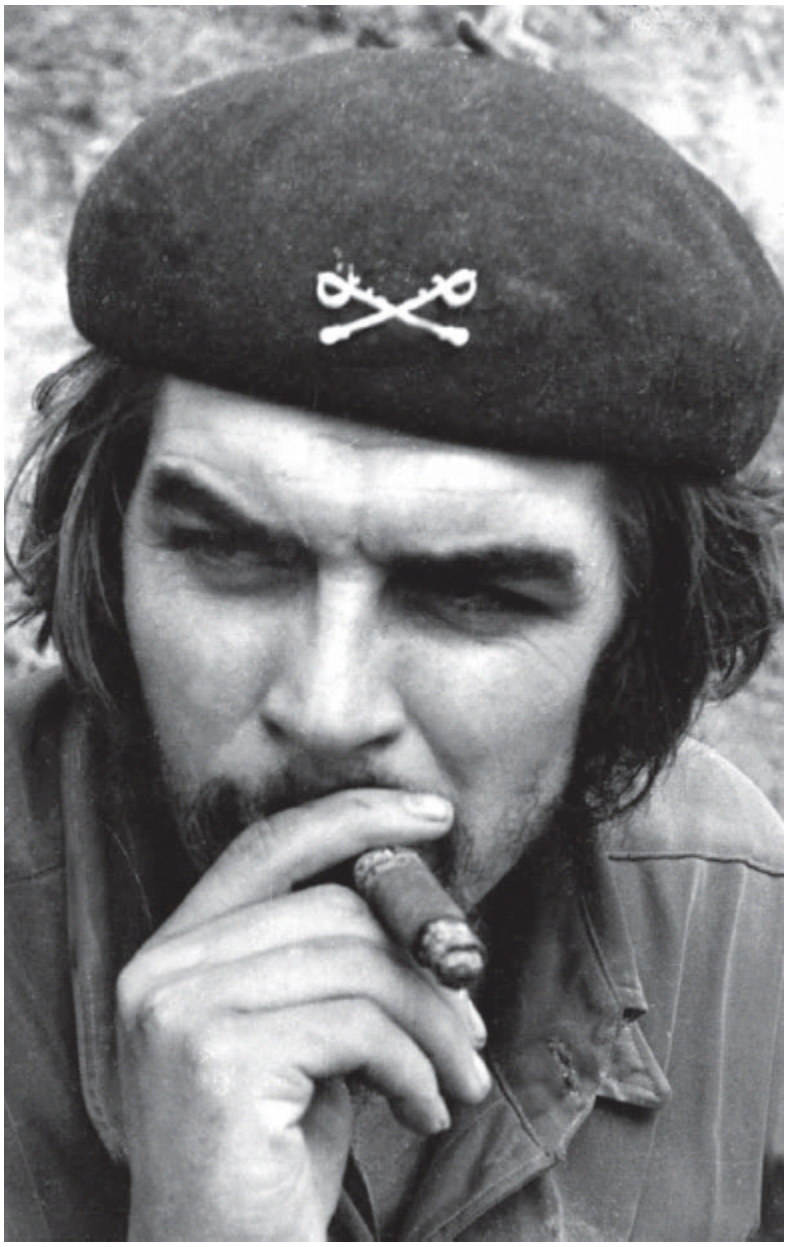
conviction, something that I had denied him; so at this moment I stand corrected.[13]

With no time for mourning, we continued to Las Mercedes, organizing a siege without knowing for sure if the Rural Guards are there or not. Simultaneously we were to scout the area while organizing the men to complete the encirclement, with the aid of Lalo and Guillermo, who had come [to join us]. The map of the positions is as follows:



31

As night ended the first shots were heard that we later learned were from the sentry shooting above Lalo's men, and once day broke, there was an intense firefight near Jíbaro with Rural Guards responding immediately. I sent for the doctors; we had news of the first wounded. The air force started machine-gunning early on all the surrounding hills, which continued all day. At night Fidel came to the top of El Jigüe and we conferred there. He told me that commander Corzo[14] had asked for machine-gun belts and parts for the Cristobal [carbine]. Fidel ordered me to carry out an attack with the 81, 60 and 50 mortars on the enemy position, but it had to be at dawn. The mortars were tested at night. During the day three of the fugitives from Las Vegas were taken prisoner. The Jíbaro lines were reinforced with [Reinaldo] Mora's squadron.[15]



Che during the campaign in Las Villas, 1958.

Che addressing the people after the capture of Fomento.

Che in Fomento, 1958.

Combatant José Ramón Silva.

Che with some members of his column (including Zobeida Rodríguez and Víctor Bordón) during the capture of Fomento, December 18,1958.

Che at Radio Nacional, Placetas, December 24,1958.

Che in Las Tullerías Hotel, Placetas, Las Villas, preparing for the capture of Santa Clara.

Che and Aleida March leaving Placetas to capture Remedios and Caibarién.

Camilo Cienfuegos and Lolita Rosell in Jobo Rosado, Yaguajay.

Che during the battle of Santa Clara.

Combatants of Column Eight, including Rogelio Acevedo, José R. Silva, Dr. Oscar Fernández Mell and Antonio (with the bazooka).

Che with members of the Second Front of the Escambray, including Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo.

Che meeting with the leaders of the Second Front (including Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo) in preparation for the signing of the Unity Pact, December 12, 1958.

Che with Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo.

Combatants of Column Eight in the Escambray.

Che at the radio transmission station of Column Eight in Caballete de Casa, Escambray.

Che at the radio transmission station of Column Eight in Caballete de Casa, Escambray.

Che resting with members of his column, including Olo Pantoja, who died in Bolivia. Photo taken by Hernando López.

At the Gavilanes Hospital, which was Che’s first camp in the Escambray. On the far right is the doctor Vicente de la O attending to the wounded.

Che and Ramiro Valdés with members of the Revolutionary Directorate (including Faure Chomón, Rolando Cubela and Humberto Castelló) on the signing of the Pedrero Pact, December 1, 1958.

Class at the recruits' school, Caballete de Casa, Escambray.

Trainees at the recruits’ school, Caballete de Casa, Escambray, 1958.

Surrender of Batista’s troops.

Second from right: Roberto Rodríguez, "*el Vaquerito*" (Little Cowboy).

Che greeting an enemy soldier after the capture of Fomento.

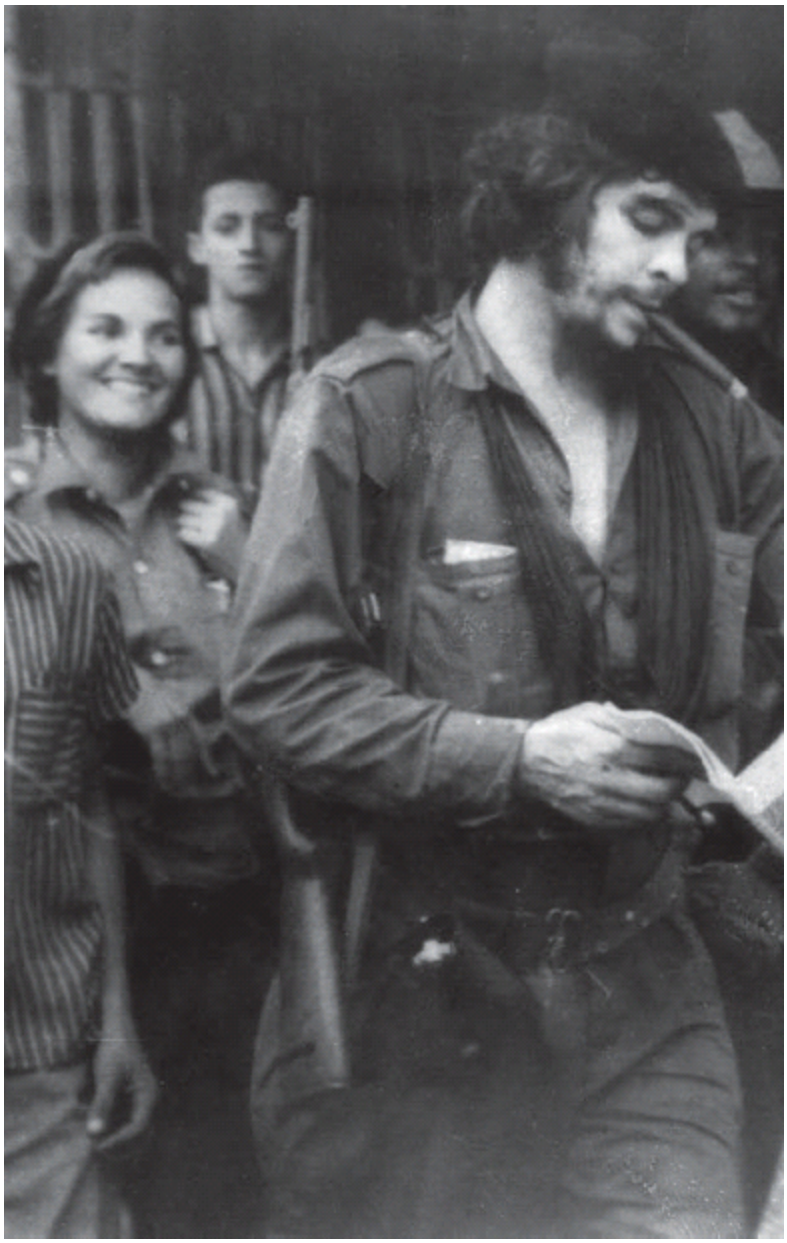
CHE GUEVARA
Extranjero pernicioso y Lider Comunista expulsado de la Argentina
CAMILO CIENFUEGOS
Lider Comunista
"Villaclareños"
Estos son los dos hombres que quieren llevar a nuestros jóvenes a la muerte y destruir nuestras riquezas.
Nosotros somos Cubanos y no Rusos.
¡LUCHEMOS CONTRA ELLOS!
JUVENTUD CIVICA CUBANA

Wanted poster for Che Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos at the time of the campaign in Las Villas.

The doctor Fernández Mell attending to the wounded during the battle of Santa Clara.

Che and Aleida March above the shop La Buena Nueva, Santa Clara, December 1958.

Che and René Rodríguez, Santa Clara.



Che and Aleida March walking through the streets of Santa Clara, December 1958.

Che and Aleida March in the Leoncio Vidal barracks, Santa Clara.

Che during the surrender of the armored train, Santa Clara.

Che talking with some citizens of Santa Clara.

Che in Independencia Street, Santa Clara, with combatants from his column, José Argudín, Aleida March, Harry Villegas and Ramón Pardo Guerra.

Che in the Leoncio Vidal barracks, January 1, 1959.

The people of Santa Clara celebrating the victory over Batista, January 1, 1959.

---

1. Commander Paz, one of the most efficient combatants of the guerrilla forces, died in Providencia during the battle of Santo Domingo.
2. There was an ambush in El Naranjal of great importance, not because of the number of weapons captured but rather for having impeded the enemy's advance and administering a crushing psychological blow.
3. The manifesto was the logical reaction to the aerial bombing campaign launched by Batista's forces.
4. Gravely wounded by a howitzer shell that hit the house of a peasant collaborator where the rebels were sheltering, Geonel was taken to the La Plata command headquarters where an emergency operation was performed, but it was impossible to save him. He was an engineering student and an outstanding combatant, who collaborated with Che in the creation of *El Cubano Libre*, the first newspaper of the Sierra Maestra.
5. Ángel Verdecia (*Angelito*), a brave combatant, was surprised by the enemy in an ambush when he was led astray by the guide when they were going to Meriño.

6. Captain Andrés Cuevas was posthumously promoted to commander of the Rebel Army for his example of valor in the battle of Purialón, where he was killed by Batista's troops.
7. In the battles at El Jigüe and Purialón a total of six compañeros died: Andrés Cuevas, Teodoro Banderas, Roberto Corría, Eugenio Cedeño, Victuro Acosta and Francisco Luna.
8. Fidel writes in *La Victoria Estratégica* that Faustino Pérez and Carlos Franqui signed the prisoner handover document in name of the Rebel Army. During the course of the day they turned over 238 prisoners, including 42 wounded, for a total of 253 guardsmen: "If the presence of a woman guerrilla (Teté Puebla) was cause for great excitement among the Guards, even more upsetting was the surprise arrival of Che… [who] had already become a legend, and the Guards relished the opportunity to see the Argentine guerrilla fighter [in person]." pp. 298-99.
9. Manuel Hernández Osorio (*Miguel*) was an outstanding combatant from Che's columns. He was part of the guerrilla detachment led by Che in Bolivia and died in combat near La Higuera on September 26, 1967.
10. All the Arabic numerals are encircled.
11. Commander Armando González Finalé led Batista's 23rd Battalion based in Arroyones.
12. The home of the peasant Bismark Galán Reina served for a time as Celia Sánchez's command post for supplying the guerrilla forces.
13. Before joining the guerrillas, Commander René Ramos Latour (*Daniel*) had taken on the leadership of the July 26 Movement in Oriente province after the death of Frank País and had gone on to become the national chief of the action squads as a member of the national leadership of the movement. The "profound ideological differences," as Che described them were due to Che's deeper political radicalization and his identification with positions of the left. Nevertheless, the courage and integrity Ramos Latour showed led Che to change his opinion, as he expresses here.
14. Commander Corzo Izaguirre was the chief of a battalion in Batista's army.
15. This is the moment in which the battle of Las Mercedes began, which concluded August 6, with the Rebel Army inflicting a decisive defeat over Batista's offensive. The counteroffensive lasted for 74 days, producing the strategic turning point of the war that meant the imminent collapse of the dictatorship. In his book *La Victoria Estratégica*, Fidel states: "In this final

balance sheet it is obligatory to highlight first of all Che and Camilo, who completely fulfilled their role of being my principal deputies at different times....” p. 348.

August 1958

1

An intense gunfight began from early on. Herman [Marks] took a group of 10 men to attack but as it became light we realized that the mortar fire was totally random; if the machine gun fired the gringo would go to his death with no chance of escape, so I ordered the withdrawal of all of the weapons. I set up a line of sharpshooters to cover the withdrawal of those below; one of the guys from Las Vegas was wounded in a lung. He was taken to a little house near the line, where the mortars that didn't show up as they should have. I waited in vain all day for some communication from Fidel. Herman reappeared at night with nothing new. Two deserters from the Las Mercedes troop, who fled the same day the attack began, were caught. They gave the following interesting information: the [army] battalion is made up of three companies with 370 men, two captains and the following weapons: three tanks, three bazookas, 10 tripods, six [Brownings], one Johnson, one mortar 81, one 60, 200 Garands, two Springfields and a Cristobal [carbine]. The plane continues dropping supplies via parachutes.

2

The plane informed us that the bazooka had hit the tank three times. This morning I conferred with Fidel and it was decided to move the ambushes as close to Manzanillo as possible, accelerating the transfer of the tank that was unharmed in the air attack with napalm bombs and missiles. It was decided to transfer *el Guajiro* and Mora to Tío Lucas, while Fonso will go further between El Purial and Jibacoa to ambush the Rural Guards from behind.

Internationally a serious problem arose when Batista asked the US Navy to guard the aqueduct that supplies Caimanera, an enclave in Cuban territory.[1] Fidel read me the statements to be released in the name of the July 26 Movement, which are very strong.

A woman who was coming to visit her husband was wounded.

3

The day passed without incident. I received a communication from Fidel telling me to send Fonso to harass the rearguard of the soldiers of Cienaguilla. I waited until I had a chance to express my disagreement, and Fidel revoked the order, deciding that they should go ahead to harass the guardsmen if they advanced beyond this point to rescue their compañeros, something which they show no inclination to do. The woman who was

wounded was evacuated and, because the planes passed very close by, I arranged the transfer of the man with the wounded lung, which could happen tomorrow.

4

The wounded were evacuated early with a counterproductive result because the hospital in Las Vegas was bombed, slightly wounding our soldier. A communiqué arrived from Fonso stating that Batista's troops had abandoned Cienaguilla, so I ordered him to set up between Purial and Sao Grande to be ready to fight any troops that advanced from either of those two directions. Fidel ordered me to dig two trenches for the 50 and a 30 [weapons] that I have, with the objective of shooting at the observer plane that drops supplies for the besieged troops. Today the helicopter landed so I gave the order to shoot it down if it tried to land again. The shortage of money impedes the full provisioning of our troop, which is nevertheless well armed. Troops keep accumulating in La Herradura-Cuatro Caminos region, but the tank is still not ready and to move it would require some teams of oxen.

5

We set up the ambush for the helicopter, but on Guillermo's side, and it didn't come. Corzo has been told of his promotion to lieutenant-colonel and [Colonel Manuel] Ugalde Carrillo [chief of operations] planned to come in the [helicopter] but something happened. The siege continued with the same features.

6

The siege continues with the same features but now we know that reinforcements are coming. Later we hear cannon fire and at night I overhear a radio conversation between Corzo and a subordinate officer asking about the outcome. He confessed to five deaths and that might be the case.

7

Since this morning unusual troop movement has been noticed and we learned from the radio that they were going to leave. But at the moment of their departure, they gave us so much lead [fired so much at us] that nobody felt like sticking their head out. When we did, there wasn't a single soldier. We headed back only to hear a distant gunfight that ended before we reached La Herradura. We returned to Las Mercedes where we found a tank which the Rural Guards themselves had set fire to. We went to see Fidel,

but when we got there another heavy firefight broke out. It was decided to continue after [the guardsmen] because the radio reported that the tanks were bogged.

We returned to Las Vegas and threw ourselves after them to no avail. Cordobí [Felipe Cordumy] was killed, crushed by a tank. We buried him. In my opinion there were several errors and a lack of combativeness that diminished the effectiveness of the siege.

8

This morning the planes machine-gunned Las Mercedes. The day was absolutely calm.

9

In the morning the planes machine-gunned a little and later the small plane tossed out some flyers indicating that the truce started at 6:00 a.m. along the Sao Grande trail. A member of the Cuban Red Cross asked for an interview with me, but I told him I couldn't accept the conditions of the truce without consulting the commander-in-chief. I sent copies to Fidel. Beto Pesant[2] died as a result of an unfortunate accident.

10

The messenger doesn't arrive and I will go to talk with them, asking for a truce until 12:00. Fidel answers, telling me that I can't accept and I send him a response at night explaining that I had already accepted, but the response doesn't arrive in time.

11

In the morning I tell [the Red Cross] that the commander-in-chief doesn't accept the conditions for the truce, but in a little while Fidel arrives. The messengers are almost entirely to blame [for the mix-up]. Fidel decides to take the jeep to the Red Cross post and we meet Lieutenant-Colonel Lorié there, who accepts part of the truce. I myself go with the helicopter to Las Vegas and the first of the wounded start arriving there. Captain Izquierdo's disposition is genuinely collaborative. A Lieutenant Pina, a special envoy of General Cantillo's,[3] comes too. It's not possible to evacuate all the wounded. Some are in La Plata, a long way away, and the helicopter runs into a lot of difficulties in getting there.

12

The evacuation of the wounded is completed and that of the prisoners begins, turning over one group that is almost the entire company from Las Vegas. Talks begin with the attorney Lieutenant-Colonel Neuman [Colonel

Fernando Nugret], whom we suspect is Batista's special envoy because he proposed in a veiled way his replacement by a supreme court magistrate (the oldest one) and a peaceful exit. Nothing concrete was decided.

13

The handover was completed during the morning and the Red Cross left, but they sent a message stating that Lieutenant-Colonel Corzo would come personally in the afternoon to bring some medicines. He did come, but didn't bring the plasma, which he agreed to bring tomorrow despite the fact that the truce was over. An army deserter who tried to rape a young girl was executed.

14

At noon the helicopter bringing the medicine comes. No planes are flying.

15

The bombardment and machine-gunning began, but not over Las Mercedes.[4] Carlos Rafael [Rodríguez][5] left for the unliberated zone. My impression [of him] is positive, despite all the intrigues inside and out. I haven't been able to organize the column yet,[6] as there have been somewhat contradictory orders about its composition. Angelito's [Frías] people are to come with me, but I don't know if the ones from Las Vegas will too. I ask to have Raúl [Castro Mercader] come but he doesn't accept; we agree that I will only take from the troop those who volunteer to go. I will probably take Fonso [Zayas] as lieutenant. I ordered that an antitank trench is made on the Sao Grande road.

16

Raúl's people arrive and it turns out there are three of them. The planes bombed the tank that's near here. I don't receive any news from Fidel.

17

They bomb the tank again, but without doing any damage to it, although it's impossible to move it due to the rain and the lack of skill on the part of the drivers. I receive a letter from Fidel saying that he couldn't organize the bazooka and setting a date for us to meet the day after tomorrow in Mompié. He tells me of a new squadron led by *el Vaquerito* [the Little Cowboy, Roberto Rodríguez], but nothing else. He also orders me to remit everything extra to Raúl, Fonso and Angelito Verdecia's people. Fonso agrees to go but his men went to the highway to look for trucks; he will come with a small but more or less select group.

18

Las Mercedes suffers an intense bombardment that destroys some houses. We decide to evacuate the rest of the people. I undertake the trip to La Plata in a jeep that Pepito Roja seized on the highway.

19

The air force bombs the Jíbaro area. A message comes from Fidel postponing tomorrow's meeting. I leave, anyway, sleeping in the little store.

20

Fidel reads me two speeches that he will give in the following days; they are really good […] We agree on the invasion plan [of central Cuba] that will preferably be carried out in cars if possible. Ramiro will come as the column's second-in-command. The planes are shooting where we are.

21

I leave early and sleep in the little Sierra Maestra store. Up there I hear about the formation of an opposition group led by Faustino, which also includes Franqui and Aldo Santamaría in the Sierra Maestra.[7]

22

I arrive at Las Vegas and continue the trip in the jeep. I get bogged and receive a note saying that the plane with Pedro Luis [Díaz Lanz][8] had already arrived. After a quick trip on horseback I get there. He brings about 70 rifles but no ammunition, also a magnificent radio transmitter and some small radios and three antitank guns. Pedro Luis tells me of the intrigues among the exiles who are trying to take control of the movement; he expresses his doubts whether he can continue in this because the FBI is on his tail. I ask for M-1 and 30.06 ammunition, which he should send in three days by parachute if nothing new comes up.

23

Nothing new today. I learn that the people I'd sent to the road are staying in Jíbaro itself and have been bombed; one man has been killed. I ask Fidel for an M-2, an antitank gun and bullets.[9]

24

Tonight I went to look for the radio transmitter, and after an odyssey, I gave up, with the jeep becoming bogged along the trail. We covered it with leaves.

25

The plane doesn't see the jeep but does a lot of turns over Jíbaro and drops some bombs.

26

Magadán arrives with precise news about the road and a pick-up truck. I order that a command post on the road is readied. There are five jeeps and a pick-up truck. Two more are expected. The planes drop bombs during the night.

27

Day dawns with the planes beginning a violent bombardment of El Jíbaro, against the very house where I am. It smashes a few things but causes no loss of life. We had abandoned the shelter when a 100 lb. bomb fell on it that could have cost us our lives.

28

We're held up, waiting for the arrival of the plane.

29

The day passes with nothing new, but in the early evening a plane arrives loaded with 23,000 bullets, almost all of them 30-06.[10] With the jeep just loaded, the planes approach and begin the machine-gunning that continues uninterrupted until dawn. It was decided at 4:00 in the morning to burn the plane, given the impossibility of moving it. So we did this. Raúl Chivás [Chibás] arrived in this plane and he's come to remain with us.

30

The Rural Guards arrived at Cayo Espino, blocking the highway and seizing two supply trucks, one of which contained the gasoline needed to leave. It was decided then to leave on foot, setting the journey for tomorrow.

31

At dusk it was decided to depart along the highway as we have no news about the army. We arrive at Jibacoa with no new developments, but almost two hours behind schedule; we can see that we won't reach our destination by nightfall. We tried to go in a tractor but couldn't, so we had to stay in a small thicket that we reached at dawn.[11]

At dusk we begin marching along the rice field causeways, passing near the hamlet of Roca and Álvarez [Roque Álvarez].[12]

We crossed the highway without any problem and got to the Jiménez farm, where two trucks were waiting for us. We began a difficult march with the column divided up because we couldn't all fit [in the trucks]. At 3:00 in the morning the first group reached Cayo Grande where we were able to catch some sleep, despite a cloud of mosquitoes. At dawn the rest of

the men arrived, having had to walk part of the way because the trucks broke down.

---

1. This support from the US government and all the aid given to Batista's regime wasn't enough, so now the US Congress approved a bill to provide funds for the construction of buildings for Guantánamo Bay's Public Works Center, that is, a further expansion of the naval base on Cuban soil.
2. Adalberto Pesant González, a distinguished combatant from Che's column, unfortunately died while deactivating a projectile captured from Batista's troops.
3. General Eulogio Cantillo directed all Batista's counterinsurgency campaigns from the command post in Bayamo.
4. For a detailed account of the organization and development of Column Eight in its westward "invasion" march, see *De la Sierra Maestra al Escambray* by Joel Iglesias (Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas), 1979.
5. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez was a key leader of the PSP, who had various responsibilities after the triumph of the revolution. In this period of mid-1958, the unity and participation of all the revolutionary forces began to be more clearly defined, despite the opposition of the conservative and anticommunist tendencies among the anti-Batista forces.
6. Although not revealing many details, Fidel had already given Che the mission of creating an "invasion" column with the objective of marching on Las Villas. Che received this written order officially on August 21, the column eventually becoming known as the Ciro Redondo Column Eight.
7. See the letter of October 3, 1958, from Faustino Pérez to Armando Hart in the appendices to this book.
8. Pedro Luis Díaz Lanz later betrayed the revolution.
9. At this point, the column gradually moves toward the village of El Jíbaro, where Che establishes his command post until the column is ready to move west.
10. The plane landed on Cayo Espino, near the home of Eduardo Guerra, the father of the combatant Felipe Guerra Matos, who died in that action from the impact of an enemy bomb.
11. Che sent a note to Fidel on the day of his departure to bid him farewell "seriously." The impending hurricane made the departure more difficult and more dangerous.

12. This paragraph and the one following were dated September 1, but Che notes: “This should be considered [part of August] 31, since it is an error.” This confusion was probably because of the pressures of the first stage of creating Column Eight in readiness to undertake the march westward, down onto the plains from the Sierra Maestra.

September 1958

1

We left in three trucks and a jeep amidst a wild storm caused by the hurricane, but it became impossible to continue on because the rain made the road impassable. The vanguard continued the journey in a truck that was able to proceed, despite the bogs, thanks to the help of some tractors.[1]

2

We spent the day separated, as the vanguard had gone farther ahead. It rained all afternoon making the roads impassable. The trucks were completely abandoned and we continued the march on foot, with a few men on horseback, arriving at Pagan's rice field from where we continued our journey after eating something, reaching the Cauto [River] near dawn; but the river had risen so high that we couldn't cross that night.

3

We began crossing the river this morning and it took until the afternoon. The horses couldn't cross the river but we got others to take the weight of the backpacks and transport some of those who were barefoot. At the colonel's farm,[2] with Camilo and Ramiro, we held an investigation about the situation with Carlos Borjas. We decided to send him back to the Sierra Maestra with the pertinent accusations. We left rather late and succeeded in getting a little more than half the way along the Salado River, which we couldn't cross due to the general flooding. Magadán[3] has already left as our guide and he's been replaced by a former Rural Guard from this area called Concepción Rivero.[4] The same night we continued on an exhausting journey, splashing through mud until we reached the Salado [River], which couldn't be crossed at night because it was swollen.

4

The beasts of burden crossed at daybreak and the men crossed gradually and were ready to leave at dusk. We found Camilo, whose people came by truck. At 6:30 we continued traveling for another long stretch, prolonged by difficult crossings of swollen rivers where we had to strip off everything and swim across. We reached Concepción at dawn, the barracks of our guide Concepción [a former Rural Guard].

5

We left at daybreak, after a shower of rain, on a journey of seven leagues through swamps, with half the troop on foot but without backpacks.

6

At dawn we reached the Leonero rice farm where the owner lives.[5] We discussed the tax on rice that didn't please them, and we also spoke with the workers, where we found a very good response. We urged them to form a union to present their demands. At night we continued traveling on a tractor and horseback, going some eight kilometers.

7

I found that the men had remained almost half way back along the road and had to wake them up and get them to leave at a fast pace, through some grasslands during the day, reaching Camilo López's house,[6] where we made camp. We continued in darkness with a few more horses through grasslands until we got to the Bartes [Barttle] rice farm that the vanguard had already taken over in the afternoon. There we were informed of some trucks that were nearby, so we sent someone to find them, but they couldn't be found; we wasted the night waiting for some food. We retreated during the day to a nearby wood.

8

We set out at night, without any news of Camilo, traveling by horse and car until dawn.

9

When the second vehicle came we got the news that there had been an encounter when the vanguard fell into an ambush, resulting in the death of Marcos Borrero,[7] an old compañero who had reached the rank of captain. (He had been demoted at Las Vegas because of an unjustified report by Horacio Rodríguez.) We had to send the cavalry to hide in La Federal woods, while we set up a good ambush with a bazooka. The telephone line was cut rather late. Nevertheless, we detained a trailer-truck and I was told the telephone doesn't work and that there are six guardsmen. When I arrive Ramiro tells me that the Rural Guards are entrenched in the house of the owner, Remigio Fernández. *El Vaquerito* and Ángel Frías attack the house and then the Acevedo brothers enter; the younger one is wounded. The Guards surrender; there are three still alive, three dead and one escaped. There are seven Springfields.

Reinforcements arrive, and on Camilo's advice we withdraw; the small plane machine-guns the combat area and our men shoot at it. Darsio [Dalcio] Gutiérrez receives a fatal wound and dies very soon. The Guards try to advance again but are repelled; we cause them some casualties but I

can’t say how many. We decide to leave tonight and we have a rough trip until we reach Laguna Baja, where Camilo and I make camp.

10

We decide to leave anyway and to release Enrique Acevedo, whose wound prevents him from continuing with us. Our contacts from Camagüey arrive and we can send him out with them. They promise five big cars but only four small ones arrive and we can’t all fit. Camilo goes alone with the cars and leaves me the horses. This way we can all go on horseback and we travel four leagues over bad trails, finally reaching the farm of Faldigueras [del Diablo][8] at dawn.

11

We spend the day on the farm without any new developments and at night, after a difficult but short trip, we arrive at a farm near El Junco. Ramiro took a different route due to a mistake by the guides.

12

We left on a short journey in which the only accident worth mentioning was the loss of my veteran cap in the mud. On arriving at San Miguel [del Junco] we found three trucks and the possibility of getting more, but there wasn’t a single guide, so we had to leave the trip for tomorrow.

13

With the indecision common to people who aren’t accustomed to such things, the guides didn’t show up and the men were pissed off. We finally left around 11:00 at night, after problems in obtaining the trucks. We first went to a farm to take some jeeps and then continued with the uncertainty of not knowing where there might be ambushes and whether or not the river was swollen. However we had no problems until we reached an oil well where we were given vague reports of soldiers on the road, but no one knew exactly where. We reached a place known as Cuatro Compañeros, where the vanguard reported that there were Rural Guards. At that moment we heard a couple of shots and I ordered everyone to hit the deck.

14

As soon as it was light, we were able to head to some woods on the other side of the railroad line where it was a struggle to get the troop across; Captain Silva was wounded.[9] Some of the men were afraid of the small plane and stayed on the other side. I gave the order to wait for them, but we decided to withdraw under the fire of the air force, which caused us two casualties: Juan Hernández, who died after his leg was destroyed by a

bomb, [and another man].[10] We withdrew without any problem and regrouped in a house where, on roll call, we realized we were missing 11 men; but although separated, the men were well focused.

We left at 3:00 in the morning heading toward a small patch of *marabú*,[11] which we reached at dawn without having had a bite to eat.

15

We spend the whole day in the scrubland where we cooked in a nearby little house and slept. We were joined by some of the men who had become separated; now only 10 men are missing and only one whose whereabouts we don't know: Morenito, from Angelito's squadron.

16

Some peasant guides join us. I speak to the troop explaining the dangers we are exposed to and the necessity of maintaining a rigid discipline to avoid these dangers. We leave at night and headed toward Remedios where we made a small purchase in the company store; we then spent some time at the rice farm of [Emilio] Cadenas where they had prepared a meal for us. At dawn, we reached a patch of *marabú* in the area of Sabanilla. We had surrounded the Rural Guards from below, but they remained just a league away from us. It was the point of greatest danger.

17

Morning found us reaching at another patch of *marabú* where we spent the day. We detained a presumed snitch called Efraín [Ibraín] Manso; then after eating a cow, we set out on the road again, bordering the rice field where they told us there were no longer any guardsmen. On arriving at a friendly house along the way, we received a note from Camilo that told me the route he was taking and where to find nine of the 10 men separated from the column. The only one missing is the one called "*Morenito*" who presumably is dead.

18

We ate really well, hidden in a small patch of *marabú*, and we sent a patrol to explore the coast because apparently there was a charcoal barge capable of transporting all of us. But in the evening they returned to the camp reporting that they found nothing like that, but that there had been Rural Guards on our trail and that they had already passed by our camp of the day before.[12] We released the suspected snitch because there seems to be a land dispute at the heart of the accusation against him. We continued the journey to Laguna de Guano where we camped in another patch of *marabú*.

19

We left on a short journey of four leagues to end up in a small patch of scrubland where we have to wait for the results of the exploration, as apparently there are Rural Guards in one place on the way.

20

The guides brought good news as far as the presence of troops goes, but no guides could be found farther than a few leagues away. This afternoon the radio broadcast a press interview with [General] Tabernilla[13] in which he claimed to have destroyed a group of more than 100 men led by a "Che Guevara." They claimed to know all the guerrillas' evidently communist plans. We walked to the San Pedro River, but decided to stop until the next day for want of a [local] guide.

21

We obtained some reluctant guides who took us to the banks of the Durán River or Altamira, where they left us, with nobody to fall back on and without food. We only had some roast meat [with us].

22

I sent Manuel [Hernández Osorio] to look for a trail, and in a while a Mr. Barreto came along, a millionaire from Camagüey and the owner of a large farm. He showed us a place where we could camp called Chicharrón [Cimarrón]. We sent out to look for a guide suspected of being a Batista supporter who hadn't made a bad impression on me. The people who went out to look for food were told that there were Guards spread out along the entire [railroad] line. The foreman advised us not to try to pass by today given the late hour. During the crossing of the river one of the new recruits deserted.

23

At nightfall we set out on the trail to the railroad line taking a guide and the foreman's brother as a prisoner to avoid any possible betrayal. We crossed the line and walked a couple of leagues more until we reached a small river called Las Yeguas, where we slept.

24

We located a son of Juan Amanza,[14] who provided us with some food and a cow. When we took a roll call we noticed that a man from Fonso's squadron was missing: Pepe Pérez, who presumably had deserted with his weapon. After applying some pressure, we got [some local people] to provide us with a guide who enabled us to cross a causeway and reach the home of the

foreman of the Aguilera company, who installed us in a little wood where we awoke the next morning.

25

We didn’t march the whole day or night, recovering our strength, and we ate two cows. We tried to make contact with a storekeeper who had shown himself to be a partisan of ours, arranging to meet with him in the same place. We heard cannon fire and possibly machine guns further along the route we intended to take.

26

This morning the man didn’t show up, and when we went to investigate we learned that he had taken off with his whole family. We mobilized the whole group, anticipating a betrayal, but nothing happened. The man had shown himself to be very helpful and had checked out the beach to see if there were any boats, although without success. At night we ate, but we couldn’t leave.

27

We left before dawn and walked all day and all night until the early morning hours and reached a spot, presumably Aguilera. We didn’t eat all day except for *gofio* [toasted flour] with milk. During the march we were seen by a peasant who escaped, causing us to keep marching all night.

28

At noon we detained the foreman [Manuel Lezcano Borrego] in charge of livestock of the rice farm belonging to Leopoldo Aguilera, who told us where we were, and that there had been no Rural Guards there since the previous day. We had him kill a couple of cows and sent the point men of the vanguard to occupy a house that’s on the causeway that goes to Florida. One of the newly incorporated men, whom I’d known from before, went with him. After a couple of hours we detained another foreman [from Cayo Toro], who said he had orders to give us whatever we needed. Then we took over the hamlet with a squadron and, in addition to making a large request, we ordered a meal. At nightfall we went to the foreman’s house where we ate a cow and rice; and after dividing up some supplies we went to the hamlet where we ate again. I also sent out to look for more supplies in the hamlet of the other [Guillermo] Aguilera, a buddy of Batista’s, which delayed our departure until 2:00 in the morning. I spoke with the administrator [Diego Casarreal], explaining to him the essence of our economic policy and our guarantee to protect the rice industry for him to

transmit this information to his boss. At 4:00 in the morning, after abandoning the tractors that took us a couple of leagues, we entered a wooded area.

29

We continued the march without stopping, but in the early morning a small plane was making circles above us. We had to stop to get some sleep and to explore. The guide we had brought didn't know where he was. In the middle of the afternoon we continued walking, taking some precautions, but when we reached the Baraguá [railroad] line we heard a shot. This forced us to change our route. We didn't realize that we were right on the line. Some soldiers advanced and Rodríguez,[15] a lieutenant from the rearguard, fired at them. It wasn't until well into the night that I learned that the railroad line was thoroughly reinforced. We couldn't go any farther, so we had to return and go into the swamp where we spent the night.

30

We walked a few more kilometers and then stopped. We have food for three days, including today. Scouts were sent out who showed that the line of fire covers the entire wood, but there's a lagoon that is free and Acevedo and Willy, together with the guide, went to reconnoiter.[16] It was decided that Cabrera[17] would go to Ciego de Ávila to ask for help in the form of guides.

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1. The vanguard traveled in the truck belonging to Rubén Blanco.
2. Arcadio Peláez Cabales, "the colonel," was the foreman of El Jardín farm in Bayamo and an effective collaborator with the Rebel Army.
3. José Magadán Barandita (*Pepín*) was the supply chief of the Sierra Maestra whom Fidel ordered to support Che's column's departure through his contacts in the area. He served as a guide as far as Camagüey.
4. The new guide was a first lieutenant of a rebel group in that area and served as a guide from the Cauto River.
5. The property of Clemente Pérez Bore who was closely tied to the Batista dictatorship.
6. Actually the home belonged to a son of Camilo López, located in the Santa Isabel de Virama hamlet in Bayamo.
7. Marcos Borrero Fonseca died in the battle of La Federal, in Camagüey province, one of the bloodiest battles of the westward journey, in which several compañeros of the column were wounded or died.

8. The old rice farm of Bajuelo on the municipal border of Santa Cruz del Sur.
9. José R. Silva, platoon chief, was wounded by a bullet to the right shoulder, which paralyzed his arm.
10. Juan Hernández (*Guanchi*) from Ángel Frías's platoon, was gravely wounded in the leg during the bombardment and later died from loss of blood, and Emilio Oliva Hernández from la Punta de Vanguardia was slightly wounded.
11. *Marabú* is a spiny brush that is prolific in the eastern part of Cuba.
12. A place known as Tembladera.
13. General Francisco Tabernilla was chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Batista's armed forces. The anticommunist statements made by the general were based primarily on documents that came from a lost backpack that belonged to Pablo Rivalta, a member of the PSP, and a combatant in the column.
14. Santos Almanza provided a guide to continue the march.
15. According to the testimony of Lieutenant Armando Acosta he tried to shoot some rounds at the soldiers and his weapon jammed, giving the order to combatant Juan Arias Noguera to shoot despite Che's instructions. This had the consequence that Batista's army detected their position and they had to retreat to a place farther into the swamp.
16. Rogelio Acevedo, Wilfredo Aleaga (*Willy*) and the guide Ramón Guilarte.
17. Medardo Ruperto Cabrera Portal (*Cabrerita*) was a member of the PSP in Las Villas, whom they asked to get information about the Escambray area.

October 1958

1

Cabrera leaves with no new developments. It seems that there are no Rural Guards after us. We left at 5:00 in the afternoon after explaining to all the officers the precautions that had to be taken to cross the [railroad] line. We approached it, but our best efforts couldn't eliminate the sound of our feet in the water. The vanguard arrived and the whole troop took the line without incident but leaving a well-marked trail. We walked until dawn through arduous quagmires, resting at the end in a dry spot where we cooked.

2

We walked all day, arriving at a spot that offered plenty of security, from which we dispatched scouts. According to Emerio [Reyes] there was a house near the mill that would be good to visit. At night we went there but couldn't find the house and had to stay in the scrubland.

3

Two scouts set out early to look for the occupants of the house, while we killed a cow and some pigs. One of the men from the house was brought in, who turned out to be the butcher from Baraguá [Felipe Méndez Ruiz], and he said that last night the whole troop from the sugar mill had withdrawn. The strip we were going along was the Itabo River that empties into the canals and swamps. In a little while two more were detained by the sentry. One of them turned out to be the hunter [Jorge Álvarez Durán] from Baraguá who offered to help with everything. I let him go to look for some medicine and in three hours the scout plane appeared, circled once and landed at the sugar mill's airstrip. Five minutes later it took off again circling the woods repeatedly. I ordered a withdrawal to the clearing in the woods and we waited there for the visit of the B-26 planes. It wasn't too long before the machine-gunning began and seven bombs were dropped. Everyone knew we had been betrayed, but it had to be clarified who the traitor was—something we still don't know. We left at night through a broad swampland with a lagoon, which took us three and a half hours to cross, until we made it to a wood where the guide got lost and we called it a night.

4

We left slowly crossing pastures until we reached a hamlet called Palenque where the Rural Guards had been a few days earlier. We obtained a guide

who took us through the cane fields to La Rosa Liberal farm, where we slept in the middle of a storm provoked by a hurricane that is forming nearby.

5

I ordered that we take over the hamlet [of Rosa Liberal] and shortly we had housing, cows and cheese. The rain was incessant. A man called Pepe [José Valcárcel Fernández] came to offer us everything under the sun. The foot disease, known here as "*mazamorra*," has struck the troops, who can hardly walk, so I decided not to leave tonight as the storm was at its maximum intensity. We set free the men we had forced to be our guides and released a kid from Camagüey, who had been shown to be a coward; during the night before another one from Camagüey had fled, abandoning two bazooka shells that were lost. We estimate that there are 10 who can't walk, but we have obtained 15 horses, most of them without saddles.

6

At 4:00 in the morning, when we were about to leave, we were told that Pepe's wife was sick and had gone to Ciego [de Ávila]. This sent chills up my spine. We walked a league, setting up camp in a wood near the [railroad] line until we could see a way to cross it. The day passed uneventfully. Cabrerita arrived with a guide [Andrés Flores Gutiérrez] that the PSP had sent and brought a bunch of reports about the situation in the Escambray, as well as offers of a radio and mimeograph machine. We left tonight because Pepe didn't come. We walked about four leagues crossing the line and the highway of the famous Trocha de Júcaro that wasn't as bad as we had thought as there wasn't a single guardsman there. We reached a small wood [Hilario Woods] where we camped until dawn.

7

This morning we got some food, cooking in the woods, but La O, who was in charge of getting it, let himself be seen. Nevertheless, there was no problem whatsoever and we were able to leave tonight. Three delegates came from the Escambray,[1] bringing a rosary of complaints about [Eloy] Gutiérrez Menoyo and his people from the Second Front. I get the impression from here that there is a lot of dirty washing all over the place. A delegate [Inocencio Rancaño] from the PSP arrived, bringing us some nylon and an offer of money, which I accepted and asked him for a contact with the [party] leadership. Seven men who had turned coward were dismissed: two of them had joined recently, the others were from the Sierra

Maestra. The hardships we've endured have had an effect on the morale of the troop. Their names are: Victor Sarduy and Juan Noguera (from Silva's platoon); Ernesto Magaña and Rigoberto Solís (from Roberto's squadron); Oscar Macías (from Daniel's)—all these were from Joel's [platoon]; and Teodoro Reyes and Rigoberto Alarcón[2] (from Fonso's group, Angelito's platoon).

We marched almost all night on good trails but under heavy rain, with plenty of horses, reaching a wood below where we had to bunch together in the swamp in order to sleep.

8

We set out on a short march of 12 to 14 kilometers to the Pelegrín farm, which we accomplished without any problem, setting up camp in the foreman's[3] house to cook, while Miguel González [Martínez], the guide from the Escambray, went out to explore what our next day's march would be. We obtained some more horses. In the course of the night he [Herman Marks] leaves.[4]

Notebook VIII

The North American had the rank of captain. He was sick and wounded but, fundamentally, he didn't fit in with the troop. The troop had to leave in a rather disorganized manner because the contacts established in La Teresa, a farm where we had planned to eat, had failed because it was full of Rural Guards. The planes shot exactly where we were yesterday; they were B-26s.

9

This morning Miguel arrived saying it was impossible to pass a very bad stretch with a deep canal and that the Jatibonico [River] couldn't be crossed either, with the bridges controlled by the army, as well; he proposed moving to a nearby wood, but I didn't agree because there are machine gunners around where we were yesterday and it seems that they are closely following our trail. I decided to send for the horses that we had left behind and some others ahead of us so that we could get away. We crossed a deep canal after a march of two leagues through mud and water, and then we went a further league and a half on a worse trail to reach a wood called Macío,[5] where the ground was completely under water. The only partially encouraging note is that there is a rice farm [Pozo Viejo] nearby with provisions which one of the men[6] knows about because he once worked there. The men's feet have deteriorated again due to all the trudging through muddy water.

10

We made contact with the rice field workers [especially Manuel Gamboa Montoya], who promised to investigate the viability of crossing the second bridge, while other people from the area checked out an alternative.

The small plane made circles over the wood, shooting repeatedly into it, without hitting us, apparently following the trail left by the horses up to the beginning of the wood. Later, a rice worker came with the news that the man who was going to check out the river had gone; but we also got news that the Rural Guards were already in control of the bridge. It was a terrible night and we were delayed because we had to eat, so we decided that everyone should stay in a house, with the doors closed, taking the horses to a nearby wood, in case [the Rural Guards] were actually following our trail from the air. The vanguard went with the guides to the dairy farm near the river with the mission of crossing it however they could and to have it under control by the time we got there.

11

We spent the day resting in a house while the light aircraft circled over the wood. In the house[7] where the vanguard is there's a telephone and we could overhear various telephone conversations between them [the planes], which gave us exact information about the army's position. With that and a guide we crossed the river without mishap, although with great difficulty and many of the weapons got wet. The Rural Guards knew exactly where we were, but they didn't believe, or they decided not to believe, that we would reach the river during the night.[8] We reached a good but humid wood where we spent the day.

12

The light plane showed that it knew our itinerary, shooting at the other side of the river, but not near where we were. At night we left on a long six-league journey with those on horseback going first. We reached a place where there was a pick-up truck in a small hamlet at 3:00 in the morning. Everything went well until the last ones let themselves be seen, when it was already daylight, in a hamlet on the Romero rice farm, where the Rural Guards had decided to intercept us. We reached a small wood in full daylight.

13

We spent the day waiting for the planes, but nothing happened. Miguel[9] went to explore on one side and Ottén[10] on the other. Ottén's messenger

arrived rather late, but we had to wait for Miguel, who arrived even later telling us that everything was in order and there were three barges to cross the Zaza [River]. We reached a causeway where Ottén was supposed to be waiting for us with a truck, but we discovered he had been held up and we had to continue in the same manner. Crossing the Zaza River—the widest we have had to cross—was fast and without problems. We slept in a nearby wood.[11]

14

During the day Martínez went to look for some horses, but he took too long and we had to leave almost at midnight. The guide took us indirectly through some cane fields, but the lateness of our departure and the slow march of the men on foot meant it was daybreak before we reached our destination, Las Damas farm, on the other side of the highway from Sancti Spíritus to Trinidad.

15

We were immediately visited by a peasant,[12] who invited us to stay at the farm where he worked, and who told us that soldiers were all along the road. We spent the day in the area making contact with some young men who were members of the Revolutionary Directorate, but they immediately asked to join the July 26 Movement,[13] which I didn't allow because I felt we shouldn't make such a sectarian policy without first talking with our people.

A PSP representative [Amador Antúnez García] came to confer with me, giving me some details about the situation of the Second Front from his point of view, which is backing Gutiérrez Menoyo over Bordón.[14] He told me that if a unity agreement was signed his party would place itself at our disposition. Later three representatives of the July 26 Movement came; one of them, Carlos,[15] who is in charge of the workers in Las Villas, gave me some reports about the situation, explaining that Bordón was always sniping at the leadership and that recently he had boiled over, leaving both forces openly hostile. I made an appointment with him on the 20th and asked him for reports that had come for me from Oriente. I explained my intention regarding unity and the elections, but I didn't find him very enthusiastic about the idea of coordinating mass actions in the cities along with armed attacks on them.

We left at night with some guides belonging to the Revolutionary Directorate, but who were said to be from the July 26 Movement.[16] We

crossed the highway without mishap and reached Obispo Hill by dawn.

16

We marched a few leagues along a highway in high spirits, resting in a little coffee grove.[17] I learned that it was near the guerrilla group of a man called Bombino, who belonged to the July 26 Movement. In the meantime, another man called Pompilio Viciedo,[18] who had killed two men who tried to disarm him, arrived. He placed himself at the disposition of the movement, although I said that before anything he would be placed on trial, and he agreed to this. Instead of coming here, the captain of the movement sent a horse so that I could go and see him; I told him that he should come to me. He came and it turned out not to be the Bombino guy but Sorí,[19] who was a man trusted by the general staff of the Second Front and who wasn't openly hostile. We spent the day there.

17

We moved a few leagues, no more than two, camping on the property of a Havana plantation owner, Dr. Cárdenas, where we asked for some horses and necessary provisions. We were waiting for the arrival of Rafael,[20] with whom I had an appointment, but he didn't show up. There we carried out the first symbolic handover of the land to a peasant.

18

We left Gavilanes in no haste on main roads, at night reaching another camp of the Second Front, whose chief had also been relieved and the new one, a guy called Balunga, wasn't there.

19

Just when we were ready to leave, we found that Rafael had arrived. I sent all the troops on ahead and we spent the day talking. I expressed my ideas about unity and accepted some suggestions and concrete offers. I wasn't able to reach commander Carreras's[21] camp tonight.

20

I arrived at the camp in the morning, but I couldn't speak with Carreras because he had left already. A little later I read a flyer that said, in its point 10, that no troop could pass through this territory, and that the first time they would be given a warning, but the second time they would be expelled or exterminated.[22] I brought the men together to talk to them about this and everyone was [blank in the original] that there should be no shooting among compañeros who shared the same ideals. After a while Carreras arrived and I told him that it was unacceptable to issue such an "order." He responded,

saying he had used that word because he was a “little thick.” He offered an explanation about point 10, saying that it was aimed at the people from the Revolutionary Directorate who “had stolen things from him.”

I received word that some of the members of the provincial leadership were already here and that Menoyo had sent an ultimatum to Bordón, telling him that if he didn’t abandon the hills on Saturday he would be attacked. I advised Carreras that he should send a letter to Gutiérrez suggesting that he should desist; I also told him that he should not expect reprisals from us, despite everything. He replied ironically that reprisals were expected only from Batista.

We reached an encampment of the Revolutionary Directorate in Algarrobo, where Tony Santiago,[23] commander of the Directorate, received me. Serafín [Ruiz de Zárate], a doctor from Cienfuegos who helped the people a lot, according to Ottén, was there. He had come to join the group in the Sierra because he was being heavily persecuted [in the city]. He gave me a lot of information about the situation with Bordón, explaining that Bordón hadn’t made it to the Sierra Maestra to see Fidel and that he had lied to his troops. He described the situation in general and reported an ultimatum made by Gutiérrez Menoyo. We spent the night there.

21

We left in no hurry to reach Dos Arroyos, the general headquarters of the Revolutionary Directorate, in the middle of the afternoon. At night we had an interview with Faure Chomón[24] and Cubela[25] on general topics as it was already quite clear that the discussions on unity couldn’t take place on the basis of the sovereignty of the July 26 Movement. I proposed a joint action at Güinía de Miranda on the basis of sharing weapons, and this was accepted in principle, albeit without enthusiasm. I also proposed a series of general administrative measures and the partition of the territory into zones of influence, where the forces of other organizations could operate freely, and this was accepted without objections, leaving the final decisions on each subject for a future time.

The doctor from Cienfuegos told me that the “hills” had treated him very badly, that his specialty [dermatology] wasn’t useful here and that he could still provide services in the *llano*. I’m not sure of the exact cause of his attitude, but it’s typical of the organization of the *llano*. Sierra [Enrique Oltuski],[26] who had talked with me for a long time yesterday, tacitly confessed that he was one of those primarily responsible for the mess of

signing the declaration, and that he had gone abroad where he had recognized Gutiérrez Menoyo's leadership of the Second Front. When I asked him for a report on which banks were located in the villages so that we could attack them and take the money, he had a fit. They all opposed with their silence the free distribution of land and showed their subordination to big capital; this was especially the case with Sierra [Oltuski].

22

I had agreed to go this morning to see Cubela, but commander [Alfredo] Peña from the Second Front turned up. He began in a friendly tone, but soon showed his true colors. We parted cordially, but as sworn enemies. I saw Cubela in the afternoon. He had agreed to give me information about the military barracks, supplied by a doctor from the village, but he didn't offer anything. It seems to me that the problem is that they are trying to bluff about their weapons because it seems they have no interest in launching attacks.

23

We spent the day resting, with no activity other than receiving visitors and writing a long report to Fidel about the march on Las Villas and the political-military situation in the zone.

24

We slowly set out toward Las Piñas, near Algarrobo, where the men set up camp while I went to see Tony Santiago to hear about the results of his investigation. I learned nothing concrete and I had to postpone our travels another day. A sympathizer of the July 26 Movement arrived to tell me about some shoes that the groups of captains Sorí and Zábalo had. At the same time Rodríguez, who had been sent to do a super-quick investigation of the possibility of establishing our general headquarters in the area of Pico Tuerto, near Sancti Spíritus, arrived. Rodríguez told me that the ideal area wasn't there but rather in a nearby wooded area called Caballete de Casa, which had all the necessary conditions. He also told me that Sorí had at his disposal 30 to 40 pairs of shoes sent by the movement.

On returning to the camp I talked with Diego,[27] head of the action group in Las Villas; he brought me 5,000 pesos that Sierra had sent and an outdated letter from Fidel, which gave me a series of instructions that were no longer of use and the order to establish the treasury in the Sierra Maestra. Diego committed himself to burning down the electoral

commissions of two or three important cities of the *llano* and to communicate to Camilo the order to attack Caibarién, Remedios, Yaguajay and Zulueta. On November 1, I must inform him if we are ready to leave to attack Santa Clara. Diego denied any involvement in Bordón's problems.

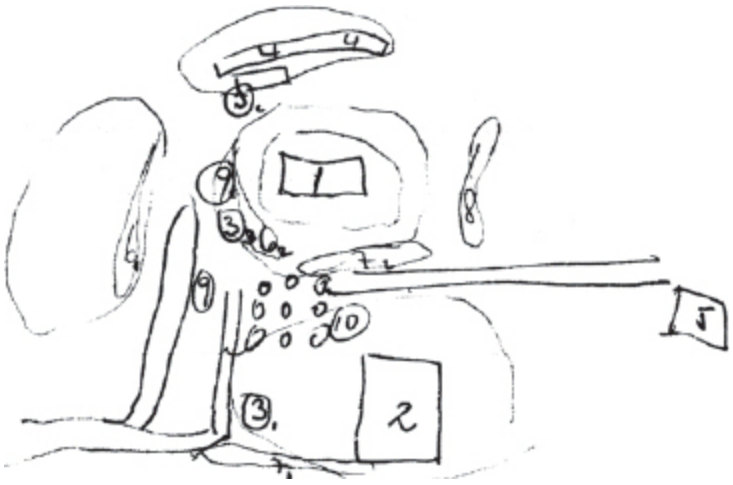
25

Bordón arrived and I conferred with him. He was found guilty of four things: signing the pact, going to the Sierra Maestra as a delegate of the Second Front, saying that he had conferred with Fidel when that wasn't true, and signing a document in which he committed himself to going to the Escambray while he was in prison. I thought we should strip him of all rank but Ramiro thought that was an excessive punishment; eventually he was just denied promotion to commander but left with the rank of captain. I spoke to the troops asking that anyone who disagreed should say so and leave.

At night Faure Chomón arrived, accompanied by Cubela. They were not willing to initiate an attack. At that moment the voice of W. Rosales's mother was heard; this was a signal to advise us that weapons were coming but they didn't hear it. They left immediately and we were left with the options of either attacking tomorrow or withdrawing.

26

We went into a wood where we were well hidden from indiscreet glances. Thirty of Bordón's men went; he only brought some 20 armed and was going to bring a total of 210, leaving 30 in his zone. The day before I sent Miguel from Bordón's troop to look for some shoes and other items. At night we began the journey toward the barracks of Güinía de Miranda.[28] Silva and Bordón took another route. Those without weapons were all supposed to go to Sopimpa and wait there for the outcome of the action. The attack plan is as follows:



1 = Barracks
2 = Church
3 = Successive bazooka positions
4 = Silva’s position
5 = Bordón’s position
6 = Joel’s successive positions
7 = Angelito’s position
8 = The vanguard’s position
9 = The command post’s successive positions
10 = People’s park

The action began at 11:30 with a bazooka shot that did not hit the mark, generalizing into a shoot-out. The bazooka changed position three times and I personally hit the target with the fifth shot, which caused the guards to surrender immediately. We used very few bullets and eight rifles and, despite the quantity of munitions spent and of the number of grenades used, we lost two men: Amengual, from the rearguard and Alberto, from Joel’s platoon. Wounded were Angelito (slightly), Silva (grazed), Acevedo (grazed), the guide from Baraguá (hit in a leg), Cabrerita (in a hand and a leg), Maquintoche (slight wound in the head) and one of Rodas’s men (somewhat seriously in the right arm).

27

We set out in no hurry, treating the wounded in a house while we rested. At night we continued the march until we reached Sopimpa by dawn. News arrived of a troop that was coming up toward Algarrobo. We gave a jeep to the Revolutionary Directorate, leaving it near the camp.

28

It was decided to attack Jíquima[29] that night, and we proceeded to carry out preliminary explorations, which didn't provide any significant information. Ramiro was of the opinion that we shouldn't attack, arguing that the barracks at Banao was a better bet with only 30 guardsmen, while this one had 49. We went ahead, nevertheless, but we delayed a lot and I gave the order to attack only if the bazooka was ready by 3:00. But that wasn't possible, according to Fonso, because there was no good position for firing. We left at 4:00 in the morning.

29

After resting half the morning we continued traveling toward Gavilanes, where we rested.

30

I received a visit from the action group chiefs from Sancti Spíritus, Cabaiguán, Fomento and Placetas, who agreed with the suggestion I made for attacking Fomento, Cabaiguán and Sancti Spíritus in the days between now and the [November] election.[30] They also agreed on the assaults on the banks and promised to help. We left at 3:00 in the afternoon for a march that we were told would take five hours to Banao to attack it tonight. But we walked 11 hours without reaching [Banao] and we had to stop a distance away from our objective.

31

We spent the day waiting, and at night, with all the details in hand, we began the encirclement of the barracks. After an anguished wait, after 2:00 in the morning, Fonso brought the news that the bazooka had misfired nine times. We withdrew before dawn, taking the wrong road.

---

1. They were actually members of the July 26 Movement: Ottén Mezana Melcón, Miguel Martínez Ruiz and Ornedo Rodríguez Ruiz.
2. On October 9 Rigoberto Alarcón, together with Teodoro Reyes, was captured by the army on the Los Negros to Palo Alto line; the former was assassinated and Reyes was taken to Ciego de Ávila.
3. Rodolfo Pérez Suyaurría, foreman of El Escribano farm, which belonged to Pablo Pelegrín.
4. This marks the end of Notebook VII. Che continues his account of October 8 in the next notebook (Notebook VIII).
5. This was on the municipal boundary of Jatibonico, the last part of the province of Camagüey bordering the province of Las Villas, the destination

of Che’s column.
6. The member of Che’s column who was familiar with this area was César Rubén Hernández Vila.
7. The home of Francisco Aquino Valdivia in the hamlet of Atoyaosa.
8. This was a place known as Paso del Diez, which the rebels baptized Paso de la Ceiba because they found an immense ceiba tree on the banks of the river.
9. Miguel Martínez went with José Hernández to the Amazonas sugar mill area to explore the Zaza River and prepare conditions to cross it.
10. Ottén Mezana, accompanied by the peasant Mario Pérez Gallo, explored the trail from the Juan Débil farm to the Paso de las Guásimas, three kilometers from the Amazonas sugar mill.
11. At the home of the peasant Lorenzo Díaz.
12. Luis Triana from the Marianao farm.
13. Actually these people belonged to the July 26 Movement: Joaquín Torres, Leonor Arestuch and Manuel López Marín, who were accompanied by Jorge Sánchez Jiménez (a member of the movement), Pablo Bermúdez (a collaborator), and Félix Martínez (the coordinator of the movement in Sancti Spíritus).
14. Víctor Bordón Machado was a July 26 Movement combatant in the province of Las Villas since its creation. He held the rank of commander at the time of the triumph of the revolution.
15. Joaquín Torres Campos was a worker and movement coordinator in Las Villas.
16. They were actually members of the July 26 Movement. To further understand the complex political situation with the various revolutionary groups that Che encountered on his arrival in the Escambray read “The Final Offensive” and “A Sin of the Revolution” in *Reminiscences…*
17. This was a place called Planta Cantú, where Pompilio Viciedo had his camp.
18. Sebastián Viciedo Pérez (*Pompilio*) was a member of the July 26 Movement and later incorporated into the Second Front until Che’s arrival when he became part of Column Eight.
19. Roberto Sorí Hernández was in charge of delivering a letter to Che in the name of Jesús Carreras, one of the commanders of the Second Front, threatening him to withdraw from the zone under his command.
20. Osvaldo Sánchez (*Rafael*).

21. Jesús Carreras Zayas was a member of the Escambray Second Front. After 1959 he joined the counterrevolutionary bands, was captured, tried and executed. For more details about the composition and characteristics of the Second Front read “A Sin of the Revolution” in *Reminiscences*…
22. This order had been issued by the general staff of the Second National United Front of the Escambray for the whole northern zone.
23. Antonio Santiago (*Tony*) was a commander of the Revolutionary Directorate, who was assassinated after the triumph of the revolution when he was discovered by the enemy to have infiltrated their ranks. His body was dumped at sea.
24. Faure Chomón Mediavilla was a leader of the Revolutionary Directorate and one of those who attacked the presidential palace on March 13, 1957. In 1958 he arrived in Cuba as part of an expedition on the yacht *Scapade*, organizing a guerrilla detachment in the Escambray.
25. Rolando Cubela Secade was a student leader and member of the Revolutionary Directorate in the Escambray. After the triumph of the revolution he was recruited by the CIA to assassinate Fidel. When he attempted this, he was arrested and sentenced, but was eventually freed and went into exile in Spain.
26. Enrique Oltuski (*Sierra)* at that time was the provincial coordinator of the July 26 Movement in Las Villas.
27. Victor Paneque later betrayed the revolution.
28. The attack on the Güinía de Miranda barracks for Che constituted an important action to demonstrate the invasion column’s battle capacity and its firm intention to fight, contrary to the intrigues and indecision existing among the forces concentrated in the Escambray.
29. The Jíquima de Peláez barracks.
30. This marked the beginning of the offensive led by Che that culminated in the battle of Santa Clara in December 1958.

November 1958

1

We corrected our course and reached Gavilanes at night, after an exhausting journey, without any sleep. Only volunteers are called on for tomorrow.

2

Bordón left early with the instruction to go to Pedrero, seize cars and get close to Fomento where there would be weapons and the people in Fomento waiting for him with all the information and militia ready. We left later, casually, reaching Pedrero from where Bordón had already left. We sent Manuel to look for trucks while the hours passed. At 10:30 the action chief from Fomento came to say it was impossible to attack now, that the best time was from 5:00 to 6:00 in the evening; there were no [Molotov] cocktails or militia ready. I gave the order to open fire anyway. Much later the trucks arrived initiating the march on Cabaiguán, but our guide got us lost and dawn caught us in Santa Lucía, having to leave Manuel on the outskirts of that village, in a place called Cuatro Esquinas.

3

The day passed with no new developments. The action group chief from Sancti Spíritus came to explain that they hadn't been able to do anything because the coordinator of the city found out about the plan to rob the bank and refused to help, threatening to resign if that went ahead. I also received a threatening letter from Sierra [Enrique Oltuski] in which he warned me not to [attack the bank]. I sent him a strong response by the same route. I gave the order to attack Cabaiguán from three sides: Angelito with the bazooka, which was already in place, and Manuel would attack the barracks; Joel would advance through the center and Ramiro, with Silva, would try to blow up the Reca refinery. After the usual uncertainty Angelito arrived, close to 4:00, saying that he hadn't been able to attack because there were too many Guards. This captain's indecisiveness has meant we have lost a lot of prestige, as everyone knew we were going to attack Cabaiguán and we withdrew without firing a shot. We reached Pedrero before dawn.

4

I ordered the attack on Jíquima for tonight and retired to Gavilanes to organize things in the new quarters under construction. On arriving at night, I found a message from Captain Julio Martínez, from Bordón's old zone, who sent me the messages signed by W. Morgan,[1] in which he threatened to

turn over the weapons that had been passed on to him. He told me that Ottén's brother, who had been expelled from the July 26 [Movement], had been intriguing on behalf of the Second Front. I gave him instructions not to turn over a single weapon and to repel any attack; I wrote a very strong letter to Gutiérrez Menoyo. In Gavilanes I found Dr. Allán Rossell, former provincial coordinator who has come to the mountains with the desire to do something.

5

At midday I receive vague reports that Jíquima wasn't attacked "for lack of position." I go to Caballete de Casa where there are several small buildings already constructed.[2] I arrive there at night.

6

We devoted ourselves to inspecting the positions and distributing the work among the almost 200 men. Pompilio Viciedo arrived and asked that a trial be held; he gave himself up as a prisoner, agreeing that all the witnesses present be called. The four witnesses made the same statement and they seemed to me to be calm and responsible, except for Naranjo, who was somewhat theatrical. I gave instructions to remove his group and leave him with 25 people, sending the others to the school.

7

Ramiro arrived and explained what had happened in Jíquima: Angelito didn't find a good position [for an attack] and passed the time without attacking. Pompilio Viciedo's men arrived to be incorporated [into our group], as did Ulloa, who runs a quarry near Sancti Spíritus. He explained how he had come by the pick-up truck to transport the dynamite, but he hadn't loaded it that day because the mill was broken.

The pick-up truck is here. René and Ottén arrived, René to say that he had sent the militias to be placed near the plain because they lacked the necessary knowledge and that they were not doing any work whatsoever. Ottén brought me a list of what remained in the mine and announced that there were two of Nela's inspectors in Gavilanes.

8

I went to see these inspectors, who wanted to know if they could get some milk, because Nela is practically paralyzed. I told them, yes, but that we would charge them an extraordinary war tax, which they agreed to. I met with the two captains, explaining the plan of action: Manuel, Joel and Bordón will continue with me; Silva will operate along the Sancti Spíritus-

Cabaiguán and Sancti Spíritus-Trinidad highways; Angelito will rest and will take charge of the school; Peraza is appointed chief of the zone, a post previously occupied by Bordón, and I harshly reprimanded Ottén for having permitted his brother to take the pistol, as well as Juan, Miguel's brother, who also took his. Later, we worked on drafting various manifestos.[3]

9

The day passed with nothing new, except information about a demand for money made by Peña's people via some of the captains he has in that zone, and news brought by the people from San Blas indicating that they had turned over some weapons, but that the Second Front's attitude continues to be hostile.

10

I was told that a rich plantation owner called Calunga was coming to see me on the outskirts of Caballete de Casa and I made a long trip in vain, because the man didn't show up. On my return to camp I found the radio technicians had already arrived and announced that the station equipment would come tomorrow or the day after. When I reached Gavilanes I encountered a transportation union leader from Santa Clara, who supported unity but was committed to a combined action in Santa Clara that seems rather premature to me. I told him that I would do it if a meeting of union leaders in the Sierra Maestra agreed with the plan. People came from Placetas to bring me plans and offer help. They brought one of the captains from the Second Front who had hidden $1,500 in his girlfriend's home. We sent off various people to look for all the members of the Second Front.

11

All the detainees and two complete guerrilla groups began arriving in the morning, and they were warned that they could not operate in this zone, and certainly make no demands for money. Ñero's guerrilla group was merged into our ranks, but none of Hernández Torrecilla's. The $3,000 were confiscated and a note was sent to Peña with Military Order No. 1 attached, establishing the boundary of the July 26 Movement's administrative zone. We set everyone free.

12

We left before dawn, making an easy trip, and then waited for night on the outskirts of Banao, entering the village at nightfall.

13

The shooting broke out just after midnight and lasted until 5:30. We couldn't take the barracks, despite our efforts and the quantity of [Molotov cocktails] we threw. Two of our men were slightly wounded and six badly wounded. We were fighting from 10 meters away. We remained alert without any new developments, reaching Gavilanes at night. Silva left for the Sancti Spíritus-Trinidad highway.

14

I received a message from the Revolutionary Directorate accepting the suggestion to hold a conference to reach a unity agreement. I answered that I would be there in two days. I went to Caballete de Casa where I was able to see the progress of the construction, thanks mainly to the work carried out by Rodríguez.

15

I spent the day inspecting the construction work.

16

After a day-long trip I made it to the Revolutionary Directorate [headquarters] but we put off the conference to the following day. I spoke a little with the workers' delegate, who agreed with the idea of unity. They went to Jíquima.

17

We conferred a long time with Cubela, Chomón and Castelló, resulting in a plan for an armed action at Caracusey on November 20, and a decision to make a joint statement leading to unity.[4] They also requested that a single tax be imposed throughout the area, dividing what is collected 50/50, and also that the same be done in the sugar mills. I agreed to the first part, but not the second, because that is a national question. I returned the same afternoon, meeting Marcelo Fernández on the way, who was coming to see me very full of himself. We argued all night. This discussion also involved Carlos (the worker coordinator), Sierra ([Oltuski] the provincial coordinator) and Serafín and Demetrio (coordinators of propaganda). We accused each other: they said I was a communist and I said they were imperialists. I told them the facts on which I based my opinion and they did the same to me. After the discussion we remained farther apart than ever.

18

The day passed with nothing new, I ordered some work done in Fomento, but it wasn't carried out because of some organizational problems.

No other entries appear in this notebook from November 19 through December 2, although Che left several blank pages, presumably because he intended to fill in the events that had occurred at some later date. The diary's next and last entry is dated December 3.

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1. William Morgan was a US CIA agent, who joined the forces of the Second Front of the Escambray. After the triumph of the revolution he was executed for treason. The message he sent argued that the achievement of revolutionary unity in Las Villas was impossible.
2. This became the general command post where a number of installations were built: a hospital, warehouses, kitchen, amphitheater, radio transmitter and a place to produce the newspaper *Patria*, and the "Ñico López" school for recruits were among the most important.
3. As commander of the region of Las Villas, Che issued Military Order No. 1 on behalf of the July 26 Movement. See the appendices to this book.
4. This represented the beginning of the unity agreement with the Revolutionary Directorate that culminated in the signing of the Pedrero Pact on December 1 after Batista's army offensive was unleashed in the Escambray, ending in total defeat. See the appendices to this book..

3

The day passed with no new developments, in the evening we received the news that the Rural Guards have abandoned Mata. I ordered that we attack them as they leave Santa Lucía. From Fomento we hear that the entire reinforcement troop left for Cienfuegos because apparently there is a conspiracy [among the soldiers] there, but we have no confirmation of that. From Cabaiguán and Sancti Spíritus there are messages from Carlos indicating that Fidel has ordered that urgent attention be paid to FRANI, but I don't know what that means.[1]

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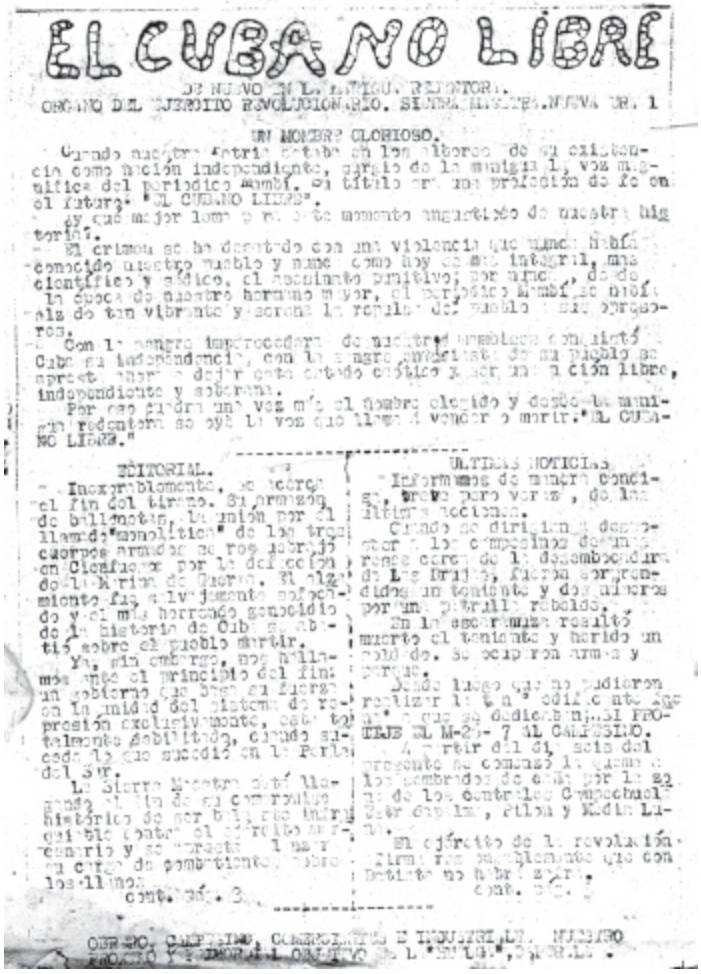
1. See the chapter "The Final Offensive" in Che's *Reminiscences…* The meaning of the reference to FRANI is not clear.

Appendices

Documents from the Sierra Maestra



EL CUBANO NO LIBRE

DE NUEVO EN EL [illegible] REDACTOR.

ORGANO DEL EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO. SIERRA MAESTRA.NUEVA ER. 1

UN NOMBRE GLORIOSO.

Cuando nuestra patria estaba en los albores de su existencia como nación independiente, surgió de la manigua la voz manifiesta del periodico Mambí. Su titulo era "EL CUBANO LIBRE".

¿y que mejor lema para el momento angustioso de nuestra historia?.

El crimen se ha cometido con una violencia que nunca había conocido nuestro pueblo y nunca como hoy se hace integral, una científica y exacta, el nacimiento primitivo; por ahora, de la época de nuestro hermano mayor, el periodico Mambí se nutrirá de tan vibrante y sagrada la sangre del pueblo y sus corazones.

Con la sangre impregnada de nuestros hombres combatientes Cuba es independiente, con la sangre ardiente de su pueblo se apresta a hacer y dejar esto estado político para una nación libre, independiente y soberana.

Por eso pondrá una vez más el nombre elegido y doblemente manifestará ante todo la voz que llama a vencer o morir."EL CUBANO LIBRE."

EDITORIAL.

Inexorablemente, se acerca el fin del tirano. Su armazon de bayonetas, la union por el llamado"monolitico" de los tres cuerpos armados se ven sobrepasados en disciplina por la decision del pueblo. El alzamiento fue salvajemente aplastado y el mas horrendo genocidio de la historia de Cuba se abatio sobre el pueblo martir.

Ya, sin embargo, nos hallamos ante el principio del fin: un gobierno que basa su fuerza en la unidad del sistema de represion exclusivamente, cada vez mas debilitado, cuando sucede lo que sucedio en la Perla del Sur.

La Sierra Maestra esta llamada a ser la de su completo historico de ser baluarte inexpugnable contra el [illegible] y cenario y se convertira [illegible] en cuna de pensamientos sobre los ilimos.

cont. pag. 3.

ULTIMAS NOTICIAS

Informamos de manera concisa, breve para ustedes, de las ultimas acciones.

Cuando se dirigian a dominar a los campesinos de la [illegible] cerca de la desembocadura de Las Bruja, fueron sorprendidos un teniente y dos alumnos por una patrulla rebelde.

En la escaramuza resulto muerto el teniente y herido un soldado. Se capturon armas y pertrechos.

Desde luego que no pudieron realizar la [illegible] edificante que se dedicaba a los FRONTERAS EL M-26- 7 EL CAMPESINO.

A partir del dia seis del presente se comenzo la [illegible] los sembrados de cana por la ley de los controles Campesinos [illegible] Cuba y Radio Libre.

El ejercito de la revolucion firme [illegible] que con [illegible] no habra error.

cont. pag. 2

El Cubano Libre, the paper edited by Che in the Sierra Maestra as the "Official Organ of the July 26 Revolutionary Army."

EL

CUBANO LIBRE

"LIBERTAD O MUERTE"

ORGANO OFICIAL DEL EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO "26 DE JULIO"
DIRECTOR: CAPITAN LUIS ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ.

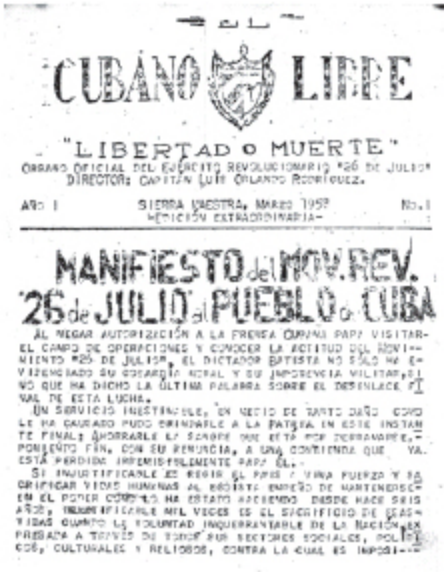
AÑO I SIERRA MAESTRA, MARZO 1958 No.3
-EDICION EXTRAORDINARIA-

¡A LOS TRABAJADORES Y AL PUEBLO DE CUBA!

DESDE LA SIERRA MAESTRA

EN EL MANIFIESTO DEL DIA 12 DE MARZO SEÑALAMOS QUE LA DIRECCION Y ORGANIZACION DE LA HUELGA GENERAL EN EL CAMPO OBRERO ESTARIA A CARGO DEL FRENTE OBRERO NACIONAL.

AL LLAMAR A NUESTRO PUEBLO A LA LUCHA FINAL CONTRA LA TIRANIA, NUESTRO MOVIMIENTO NO HACE EXCLUSIONES DE NINGUNA INDOLE. TODOS LOS TRABAJADORES CUBANOS, CUALQUIERA QUE SEA SU SIMILITUD POLITICA O REVOLUCIONARIA, TIENEN DERECHO A INTEGRAR LOS COMITES DE HUELGA EN LOS CENTROS DE TRABAJO. EL FRENTE OBRERO NACIONAL NO ES UN ORGANISMO SECTARIO; SE LES DA COMO INSTRUMENTO PARA AUNAR Y DIRIGIR A LOS OBREROS EN LA LUCHA CONTRA LA DICTADURA. LA DIRECCION DEL FRENTE OBRERO COORDINARA SUS ESFUERZOS CON LAS FRACCIONES OBRERAS DE LAS ORGANIZACIONES POLITICAS Y REVOLUCIONARIAS QUE COMBATEN CONTRA EL REGIMEN Y CON TODOS LOS NUCLEOS SINDICALIZADOS QUE LUCHAN POR LAS REIVINDICACIONES [illegible] Y POLITICAS DE SU CLASE PARA QUE NINGUN TRABAJADOR DEJE DE INCORPORARSE AL PATRIOTICO ESFUERZO.



EL

CUBANO LIBRE

"LIBERTAD O MUERTE"

ORGANO OFICIAL DEL EJERCITO REVOLUCIONARIO "26 DE JULIO"
DIRECTOR: CAPITAN LUIS ORLANDO RODRIGUEZ.

AÑO I SIERRA MAESTRA, MARZO 1958 No.1
-EDICION EXTRAORDINARIA-

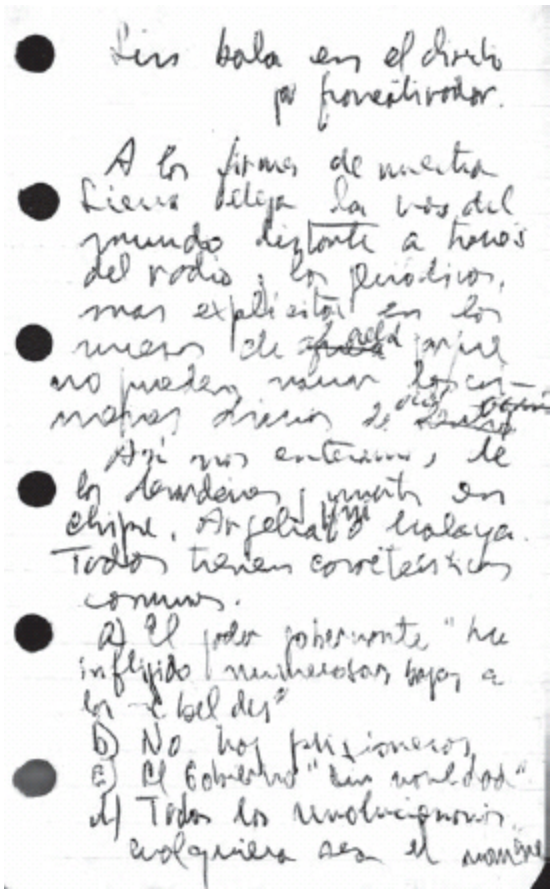
MANIFIESTO del MOV. REV. 26 de JULIO al PUEBLO de CUBA

AL NEGAR AUTORIZACION A LA PRENSA CUBANA PARA VISITAR EL CAMPO DE OPERACIONES Y CONOCER LA ACTITUD DEL MOVIMIENTO "26 DE JULIO", EL DICTADOR BATISTA NO SOLO HA EVIDENCIADO SU COBARDIA MORAL Y SU IMPOTENCIA MILITAR, SINO QUE HA DICHO LA ULTIMA PALABRA SOBRE EL DESENLACE FINAL DE ESTA LUCHA.

UN SERVICIO INESTIMABLE, EN MEDIO DE TANTO DAÑO COMO LE HA CAUSADO PUDO BRINDARLE A LA PATRIA EN ESTE INSTANTE FINAL: AHORRARLE LA SANGRE QUE ESTA POR DERRAMARSE. PONIENDO FIN, CON SU RENUNCIA, A UNA CONTIENDA QUE YA ESTA PERDIDA IRREMISIBLEMENTE PARA EL.

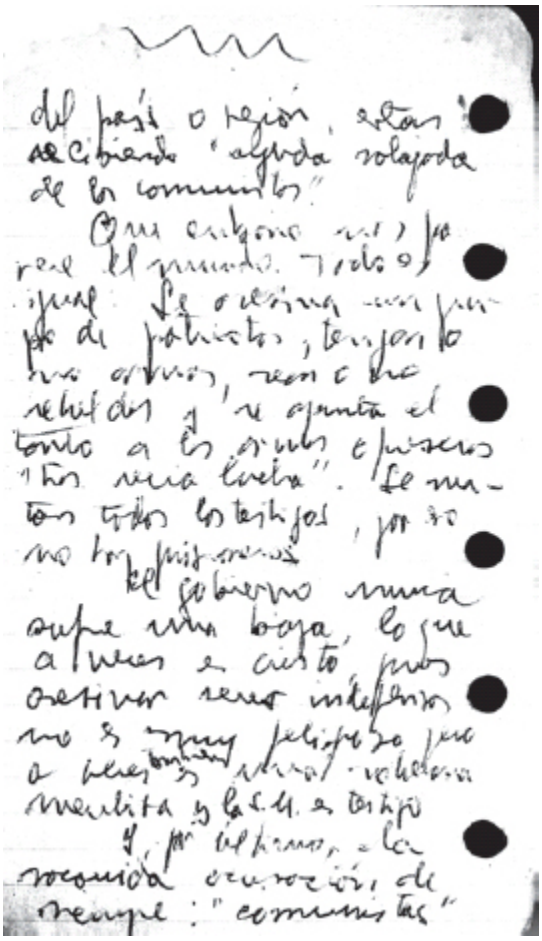
SI INJUSTIFICABLE ES TODO EL PAIS Y UNA FUERZA Y SACRIFICAR VIDAS HUMANAS AL SOLO HECHO DE MANTENERSE EN EL PODER CUANDO SE ESTA PERDIENDO DESDE HACE SEIS AÑOS, INJUSTIFICABLE MIL VECES ES EL SACRIFICIO DE CIENTOS DE VIDAS CUANTO LA VOLUNTAD INQUEBRANTABLE DE LA NACION EXPRESADA A TRAVES DE TODOS SUS SECTORES SOCIALES, POLITICOS, CULTURALES Y RELIGIOSOS, CONTRA LA CUAL ES IMPOSI-

Later editions of *El Cubano Libre* from the Sierra Maestra.


Sin bala en el directo
por Francotirador.

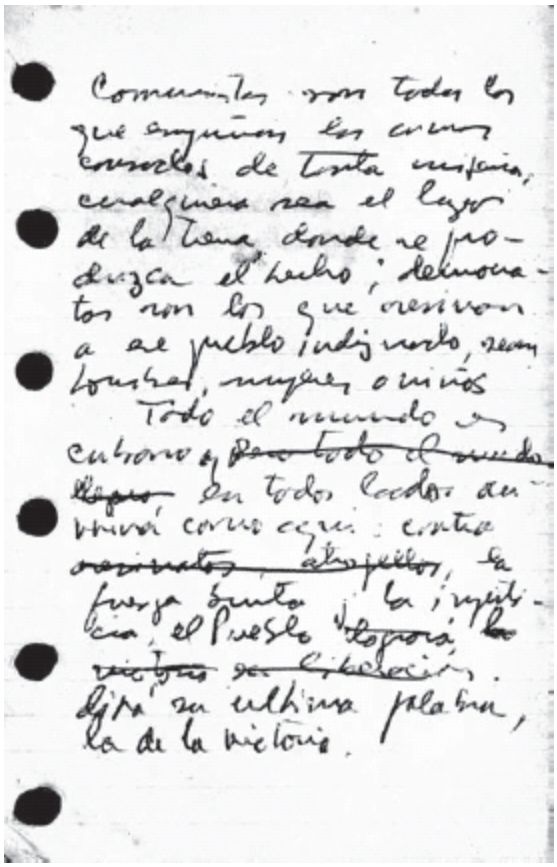
A las fuerzas de nuestra
Tierra baleja la voz del
mundo distante a través
del radio; los periódicos,
más explícitos en los
menos [illegible] pero
no pueden variar los con-
ceptos dentro de [illegible]
Aquí nos enteramos, de
los derrotas, muertes en
chiripa, derrotas batayas.
Todos tienen caracteristicas
comunes.
a) El poder gubernamental "ha
infligido numerosas bajas a
los rebeldes"
b) No hay prisioneros
c) El Gobierno "tiene moral"
d) Todas las revoluciones
cualquiera sea el nombre

(1 of 3)
Facsimiles of “Sin bala en el directo” [“Without firing a shot”] written by Che under the pen name *Francotirador* [“Sharpshooter”] and published in *El Cubano Libre*.



del país o región, ellos
recibiendo "alguna rebajada
de los comunistas".
Que exigimos en
real el mundo. Todo
igual. Se ordena con
de patriotas, tengan lo
sus armas, con c
rebeldes y se apunta el
tanto a los grupos e fuerzas
"Son mala huella". Le ma-
tan todos los testigos, por si
no los existieran.
El gobierno ruega
subir una bajada, lo que
a veces es cierto, pues
obtener votos independ
no es muy peligroso para
a veces, pero rebelarse
muerte y la S.A. a bajo
Y, por último, a la
recomida ocurrencia de
siempre: "comunistas"

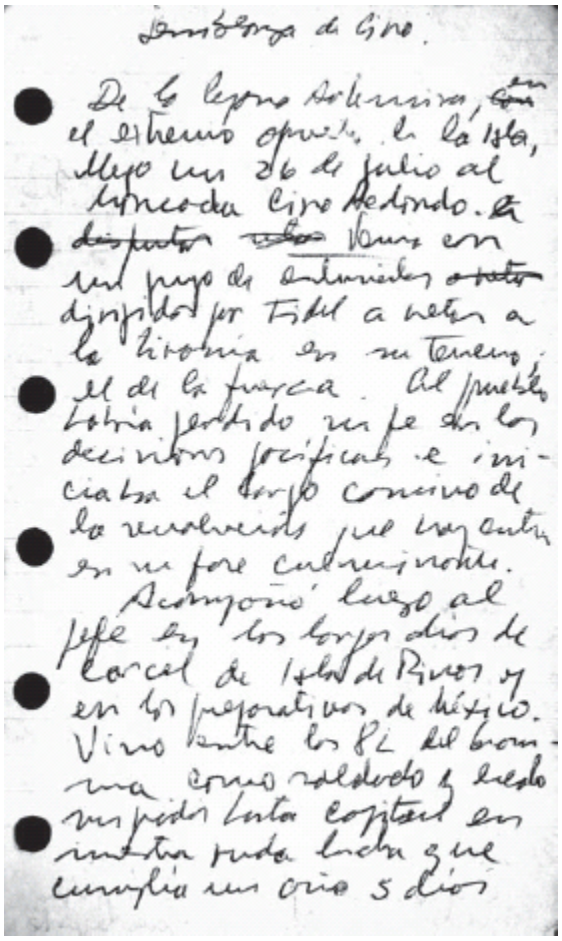
(2 of 3)



Comunistas son todos los que anhelan los cambios sociales de toda índole, cualquiera sea el lugar de la tierra donde se produzca el hecho; democratas son los que oprimen a un pueblo indefenso, sean hombres, mujeres o niños

Todo el mundo se entiende, ~~Pero todo el mundo~~ ~~llegará~~ en todos lados debe llegará como aquí: contra ~~asesinatos~~ atropellos, la fuerza bruta la injusticia, el Pueblo ~~triunfará~~ ~~triunfa~~ en Libertad. dirá su ultima palabra, la de la victoria.

(3 of 3)



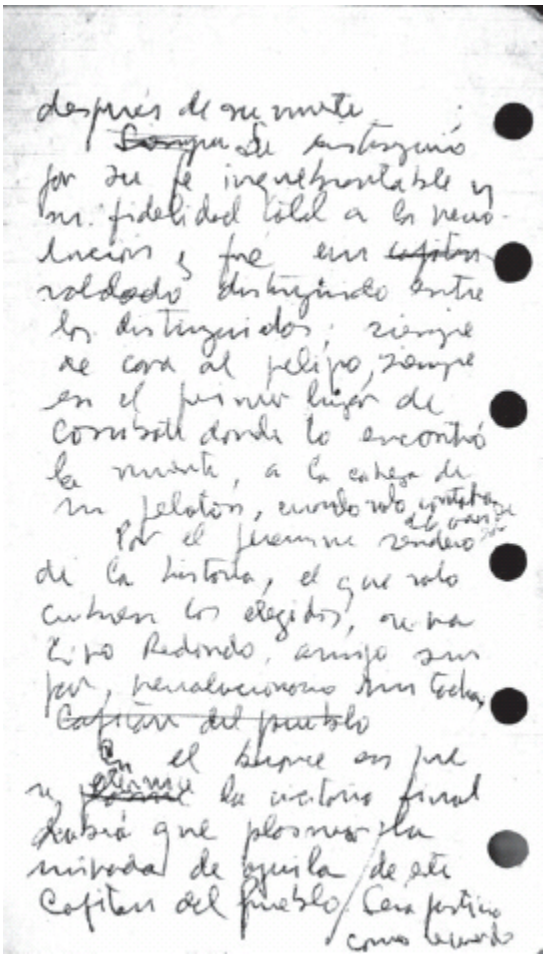
Semblanza de Ciro.

De la legión dominicana, en el extremo opuesto de la Isla, llegó en 26 de julio al lado de Ciro Redondo. El dictador Trujillo envió en un grupo de aventureros despedido por Fidel a meter a la traición en su terreno, el de la fuerza. Al puesto faltaba perdido un fe de los decididos sacrificados e iniciaba el largo combate de la revolución que hoy entra en su fase culminante.

Acompañó luego al jefe en los largos días de cárcel de Isla de Pinos y en los preparativos de México. Vino entre los 82 del Granma como soldado y luego un jefe hasta caer en nuestra ruda lucha que cumplía un año y días

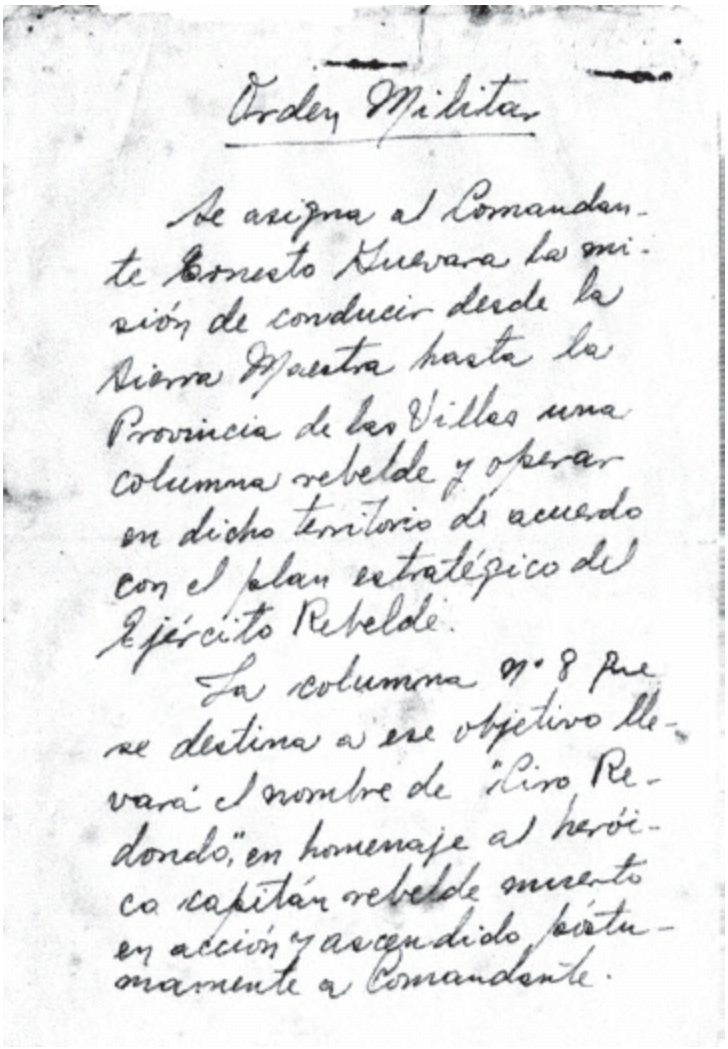
(1 of 2)

Portrait of the fallen combatant Ciro Redondo written by Che and published in *El Cubano Libre*.



después de su muerte
~~Sangre~~ de sus seguidores
por su fe inquebrantable y
su fidelidad total a la revo-
lución y fue un ~~capitán~~
soldado distinguido entre
los distinguidos; siempre
de cara al peligro, siempre
en el primer lugar de
combate donde lo encontró
la muerte, a la cabeza de
su pelotón, cumpliendo ~~cabalmente~~ el deber
Por el Jerusalén verdadero
de la historia, el que solo
cuentan los elegidos, en un
Libro Redondo, arriba con
Dios, reivindicamos hoy todos
~~Capitán del pueblo~~
en el tiempo en que
su ~~gloria~~ la victoria final
habrá que plasmar la
mirada de águila del
Capitán del pueblo. Con justicia
como siempre

(2 of 2)



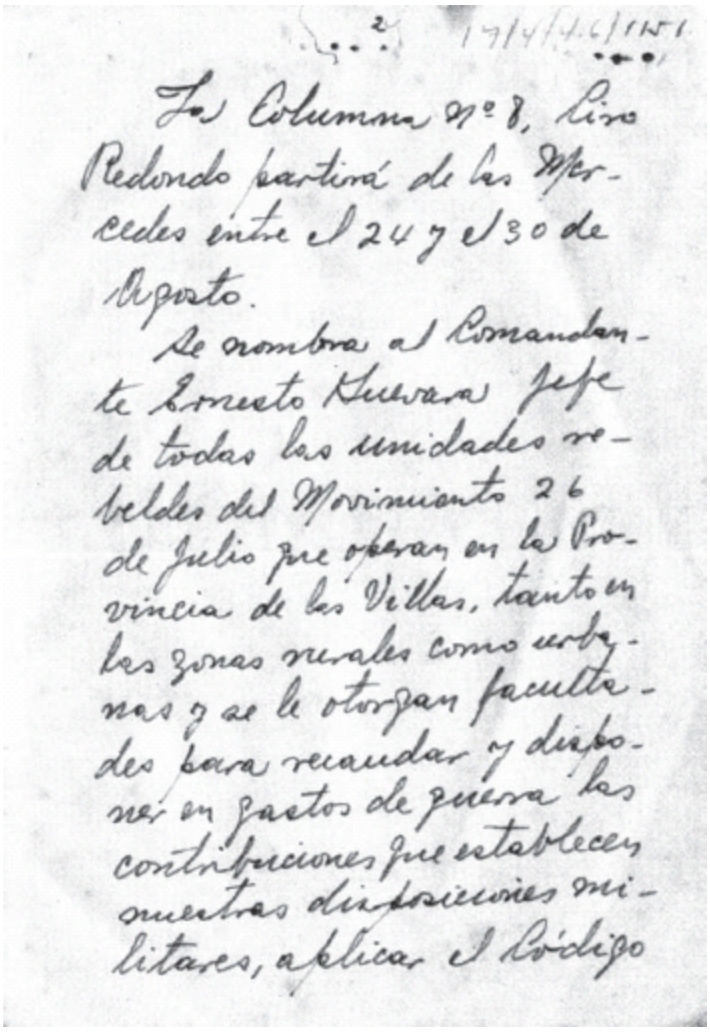
Orden Militar

Se asigna al Comandante Ernesto Guevara la misión de conducir desde la Sierra Maestra hasta la Provincia de las Villas una columna rebelde y operar en dicho territorio de acuerdo con el plan estratégico del Ejército Rebelde.

La columna nº 8 que se destina a ese objetivo llevará el nombre de "Ciro Redondo" en homenaje al heróico capitán rebelde muerto en acción y ascendido póstumamente a Comandante.

(1 of 4)

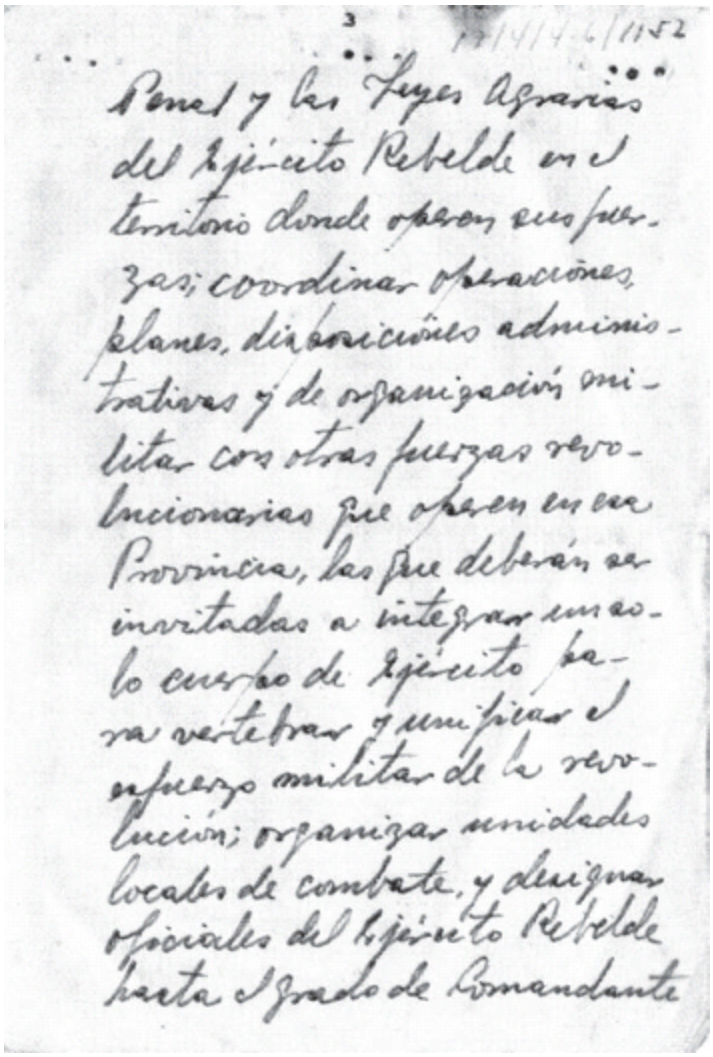
Military order signed by Fidel Castro in August 1958 giving Che Guevara, as head of the Ciro Redondo Column Eight, the mission to extend the revolutionary war front to Las Villas province.



La Columna Nº 8, Ciro Redondo partirá de las Mercedes entre el 24 y el 30 de Agosto.

Se nombra al Comandante Ernesto Guevara Jefe de todas las unidades rebeldes del Movimiento 26 de Julio que operan en la Provincia de las Villas, tanto en las zonas rurales como urbanas y se le otorgan facultades para recaudar y disponer en pactos de guerra las contribuciones que establezcan nuestras disposiciones militares, aplicar el Código

(2 of 4)



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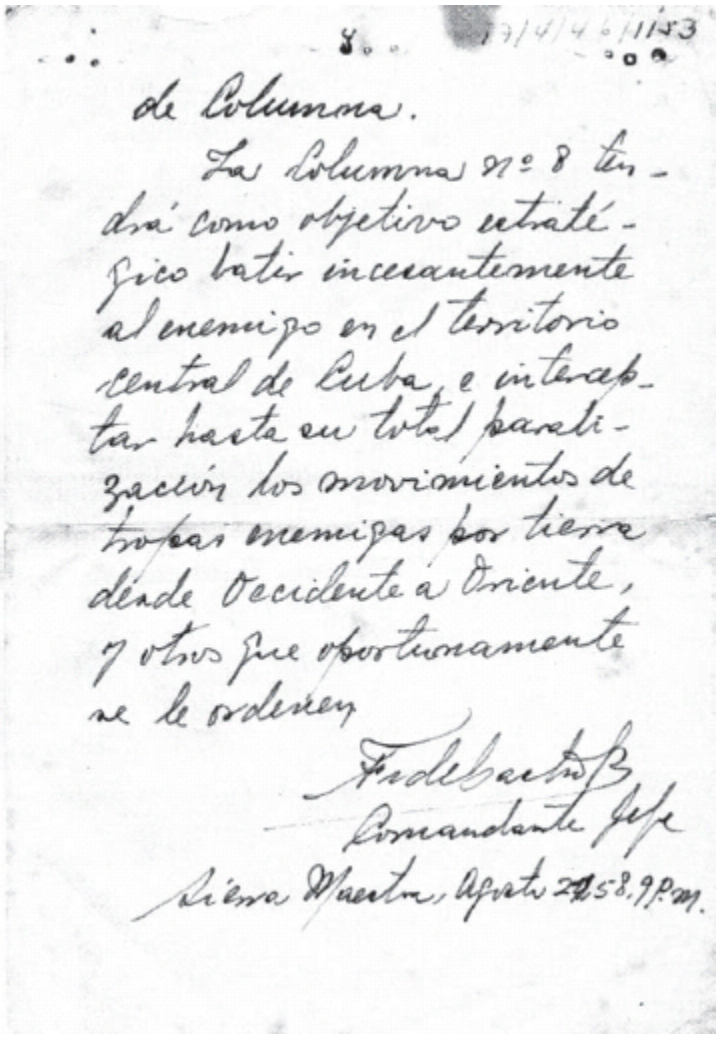
Penal y las Leyes Agrarias del Ejército Rebelde en el territorio donde operen sus fuerzas; coordinar operaciones, planes, disposiciones administrativas y de organización militar con otras fuerzas revolucionarias que operen en esa Provincia, las que deberán ser invitadas a integrar un solo cuerpo de Ejército para vertebrar y unificar el esfuerzo militar de la revolución; organizar unidades locales de combate, y designar oficiales del Ejército Rebelde hasta el grado de Comandante

(3 of 4)



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de Columna.

La Columna nº 8 tendrá como objetivo estratégico batir incesantemente al enemigo en el territorio central de Cuba, e interceptar hasta su total paralización los movimientos de tropas enemigas por tierra desde Occidente a Oriente, y otros que oportunamente se le ordenen

Fidel Castro B
Comandante Jefe

Sierra Maestra, Agosto 28 58. 9 P.M.

(4 of 4)

Letter from Faustino Pérez to Armando Hart

Sierra Maestra
October 3, 1958
Dr. Armando Hart,
Compañero and brother,

I want to shake the laziness out of my pen to write you a letter that I have owed you for some time. Since the ill-fated days when you fell prisoner, I have wanted to express to you all the concern and anguish that affected us and the entire movement regarding your fate in the claws of the thugs and what your capture meant for us.

The movement was entering a stage of revolutionary consolidation, we could count on increasing public support, our forces were multiplying militarily and, in terms of organization, our cadres had definitely become more militant. What was lacking was establishing a more thoroughly integrated leadership, a more systematic orientation and more complete and precise doctrine and program. Your trip to and stay in the liberated zone made us conceive of the certainty of being able to make, upon your return, a formidable step forward in achieving these goals. The analysis and discussion of all the problems related to the revolution and the movement must have been fruitful, especially for those like you who, in addition to extraordinary capabilities, had the forthrightness and willingness to state them, define and resolve them. No wonder such a revolutionary and historic document as [Fidel Castro's] letter to the Cuban Liberation Junta emerged in such circumstances. On the other hand, we already had the precedent of your vibrant performance as the chief coordinator of the movement, where you left, in a short period of time, a bright and fruitful mark. But the worst happened at the best time. We were left with a directionless leadership, although the movement showed its strength by preventing your assassination, which was yet another victory that served as further encouragement to continue. Things could not continue to be as they had been with your guiding presence, invigorated by the trip [to the Sierra Maestra]; but we had to continue and we entrusted Zoilo with your position in order to make your absence felt less keenly.

I was still convinced that Havana needed special attention, so I returned there, and it is my firm conviction that we took the movement to its "Golden Era" in the capital, the peak of which was between the kidnapping

of Fangio[1] and the 21 Point Manifesto that came out of a meeting in the Sierra Maestra during moments of revolutionary effervescence in the *llano*.

We all agreed that the level of organization achieved and the state of tension in the air encouraged the initiative of the general strike. A spontaneous and total student walkout had crystalized. We began working toward the decisive dates of April 1 and 5 suggested in the Manifesto, which seemed to prolong the agony of a regime on its deathbed. We were of the opinion that Monday March 31 was the best date, but when we told the compañeros in Santiago, they thought it would be better to wait a few more days. Hence the April 9 date emerged. It was one of the first errors that led to a failure that should never have been. Even worse errors consisted of inadequate and counterproductive tactical mechanisms that were put in place to produce and call for the strike. And so we later saw clearly how an organization that had reached an acceptable level of efficiency did not function because we didn't give it a chance. We kept secret the agreed upon date, supposedly to benefit the actions of the militias, and we did a last minute call on several radio stations, at a time—11:00 in the morning—when only a few housewives are tuning in; and on a date when the momentum had been lost.

We caught by surprise our own organized cadres (workers of the Civic Resistance, students, and even our tactical action squads) and the general population who learned, by various means and at different times, about the call [for a general strike] from an uncertain source. Had the call for a general strike been launched 48 hours earlier, informing and mobilizing the entire organization, it would have come off as a formidable element of necessary agitation. All this, added to the incomplete sabotage of public services and other less visible and immediate targets, wiped out what should otherwise have been a sure thing.

Thus the strike in Havana was undermined and the tragic consequences have been incalculable. Not only did we waste another opportunity to overthrow the tyranny—the streets of the capital and the entire soil of Cuba were again drenched with selfless blood—but in the minds of the general public, and even in those of our revolutionary leadership, there was a false impression that our tried and true strategy of general strike and armed uprising was wrong and even our militants were clamoring for unity and the theory of a war of armies.

I personally take responsibility for all of it and I feel a personal despair like nothing I have ever experienced before. I was not immune to the loss of so many dedicated combatants, promising cadre who will not be there to build the future or meet the needs of the present struggle. Just to mention those closest to us, in only a few days we lost Fontán, Alcides Pérez, Mingolo, Sergio, Marcelo, Pepe, Alemancito, Lucero and, to top it all off, your brother, our brother Enrique [Hart], who was killed, as you yourself said, by his enthusiasm. That person, filled with restlessness and overflowing with vitality, always held tightly the cord of action. In his orbit there could be nothing dead or static. He was like the "strong water" to test the "pure gold" and eliminate the false. The revolution will feel his absence and, together with the pain of not having him, we will feel the inspiration of his example and mettle.

The failure and its tragic consequences, the knowledge of the mistakes committed, and other internal weaknesses and *mea culpas*, have left a deep scar on my spirit, and with my soul destroyed I left for the heroic Sierra Maestra with my convictions a bit awry. I had thought myself stronger and that had made me weak. But the Sierra is a savior. It has saved the revolution from being annihilated and it saves sick souls from death. To breathe the fresh mountain air, to live with nature, exercise your muscles and your will through the effort of hard living and sacrifice, to be overcome with the emotion of fighting for liberty in an environment where you fall illuminated by the sun and are embraced by a grateful earth—this detoxifies, stimulates, heals, recuperates and revives.

Like a shadow my stubborn thoughts followed me, perhaps it was my pride, thinking that Havana—problematic and slandered—was capable of responding, and that I could, and should, make it so. But the will of the executive in the Sierra Maestra won out and I returned here with Daniel, Mario, and Franqui, united with Fidel. The difficult trip to the general command took almost a month, during a crucial time for the revolution. The dictatorship, emboldened by the failure of the strike, thought it was the right time to take out the bulwark of the Sierra, and to that end concentrated all its efforts, launching an offensive of incredible magnitude. They penetrated deep into the mountains and every day the "helmets" [Batista's forces] were closing in. The situation became critical. But the justice of our cause served to raise morale, increase the fighting spirit, and multiply the invisible forces. This reality worked within the men of the Rebel Army, sometimes

consciously, and more often by instinct and influence, producing, with Fidel's strategic genius, the miracle, or rather, the extraordinary feat of turning an extremely difficult situation into a resounding triumph and, for the dictatorship, an easy victory became an embarrassing military disaster.

I don't know whether the curtain of cell bars and silence that separates you from the outside has allowed you to be aware of the succession of military statements issued by the general command during the offensive. The truthful, beautiful and strong content [of their statements] and their political guidance reveal the great maturity, revolutionary sincerity and leadership capability of Fidel which, coupled with his extraordinary work ethic and his powerful intuition, make up for his tendency to forget the rules and organizational systems and do almost everything himself. Of course this is an unconscious tendency, as when it is drawn to his attention, he recognizes the usefulness and need for this, so I have hope that we can also improve in this area.

And so, the end result of the offensive can be summed up as follows: more than 500 weapons seized, including 81 and 60 mortars, bazookas, heavy machine guns, a good amount of ammunition, more than 400 wounded and prisoners turned over to the International Red Cross, which has had incalculable military, political and human consequences. Several hundred dead enemies, 27 losses on our side and 50 wounded, with not one prisoner; the accelerated departure of the rest of [Batista's] forces from the Sierra Maestra and the nearby towns; consolidation and expansion of the liberated zone; an immediate offensive launched by multiple rebel columns that are invading the western provinces; the increasing demoralization of Batista's army with massive incidences of insubordination; a growing sense of a combative spirit in the cities. Honestly, I never thought what I am seeing was a possibility and that was one of our biggest errors. While recognizing the *sierra* as a focal point of rebellion with an extraordinary symbolic importance, we failed to calculate its military possibilities. I still remember I told Fidel (when I came with [*New York Times* journalist Herbert] Matthews) that the important thing was for [the guerrillas] not to be destroyed, that they should hide deep in a cave since all that was needed was for it to be known that they were there [in the mountains] while we would take care of the rest in the *llano*.

Today I am happy he [Fidel] didn't listen to me. Although the reverse was also true in that the *sierra* lost sight of appreciating the struggle in the

cities. On a tragically significant day for the movement we lost Daniel. This was on July 30, on the first anniversary of Frank's [País] death. His was the only casualty in our next-to-last battle on the brink of the victory that he, on the front line, had helped forge. It was one more loss, which Cuba, I am sure, has mourned in silence. One cannot conceive that such a true revolutionary, wholesome spirit, generous son could give his life for his suffering mother without her shedding tears. We lost another brother and we felt that our hearts grew smaller and smaller each time.

My role in all this process of the offensive was more that of active spectator than direct protagonist. I now begin to exercise my limited capabilities as head of the civil administration of the liberated zone (ACTL). I believe it will be of positive value that, even in the midst of the rigors of battle, the movement shows its readiness to begin to organize with revolutionary enthusiasm the collective life of the territory it governs, to defend and encourage the legitimate interests and concerns of the people, to promote and put at the service of the people the potential growth and wealth [of Cuba] that circumstances, nature, and hard work can offer. By taking responsibility and with forward thinking we can show what can be done in Cuba with all the resources of power in the hands of the revolution. During the offensive activities not directly related to the war were suspended, but as the war winds down the many concerns of the peasant population are being attended to. We have established throughout the [liberated] territory many community meetings, hospitals, and courts. [We have] a prison (Puerto Malanga), with a penitentiary system unparalleled in its humaneness, service to the public and hygiene. The military recruit training school is headed by Aldo, the honorable brother of his brothers, with 400 students at this time, where citizen-soldiers are being forged, and where the recruits' educational and medical needs are met, in addition to their military training. The peasants are being organized and any labor or endeavor that promotes the betterment of their lives will be supported. If, despite the challenges and scarce resources, and in the midst of the august and eloquent silence of these mountains, we are able to make real our hopes, I will feel satisfied. While the indomitable rebel forces penetrate into the heart of the provinces to shake the already crumbling scaffolding of the dictatorship, to the heart of these mountains many valuable compañeros are arriving to nurture their capacity to work and create. [...]

With an embrace,

Fausto

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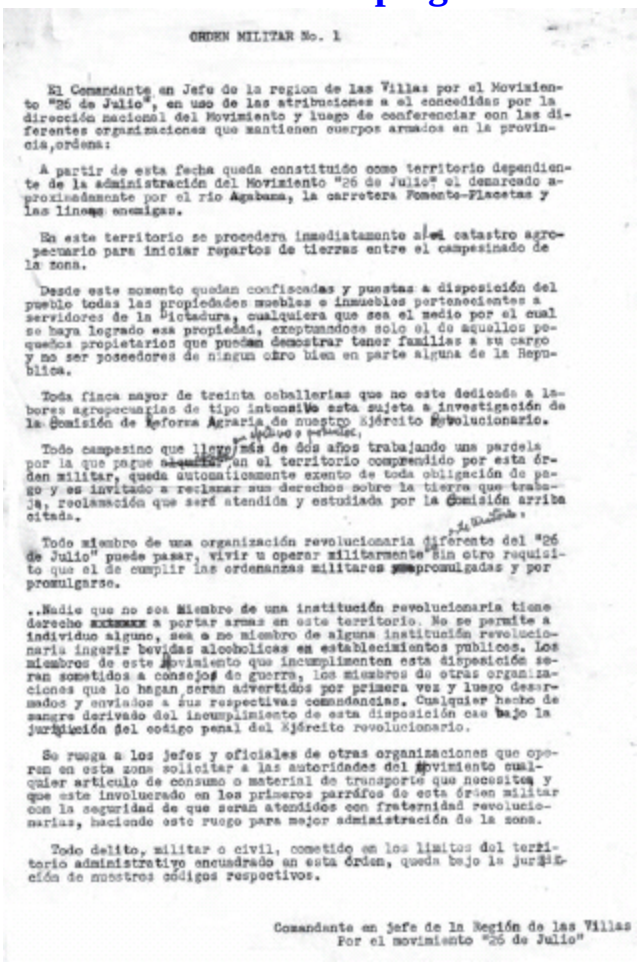
1. Juan Manuel Fangio was a famous Argentine racing car driver.

Documents from the campaign in Las Villas



ORDEN MILITAR No. 1

El Comandante en Jefe de la region de las Villas por el Movimiento "26 de Julio", en uso de las atribuciones a el concedidas por la dirección nacional del Movimiento y luego de conferenciar con las diferentes organizaciones que mantienen cuerpos armados en la provincia,ordena:

A partir de esta fecha queda constituido como territorio dependiente de la administración del Movimiento "26 de Julio" el demarcado aproximadamente por el rio Agabama, la carretera Fomento-Placetas y las lineas enemigas.

En este territorio se procedera inmediatamente al catastro agropecuario para iniciar repartos de tierras entre el campesinado de la zona.

Desde este momento quedan confiscadas y puestas a disposición del pueblo todas las propiedades muebles e inmuebles pertenecientes a servidores de la Dictadura, cualquiera que sea el medio por el cual se haya logrado esa propiedad, exeptuandose solo el de aquellos pequeños propietarios que puedan demostrar tener familias a su cargo y no ser poseedores de ningun otro bien en parte alguna de la Republica.

Toda finca mayor de treinta caballerias que no este dedicada a labores agropecuarias de tipo intensivo esta sujeta a investigación de la Comisión de Reforma Agraria de nuestro Ejército Revolucionario.

Todo campesino que lleve más de dos años trabajando una parcela por la que pague alquiler en el territorio comprendido por esta órden militar, queda automaticamente exento de toda obligación de pago y es invitado a reclamar sus derechos sobre la tierra que trabaja, reclamación que será atendida y estudiada por la Comisión arriba citada.

Todo miembro de una organización revolucionaria diferente del "26 de Julio" puede pasar, vivir u operar militarmente sin otro requisito que el de cumplir las ordenanzas militares promulgadas y por promulgarse.

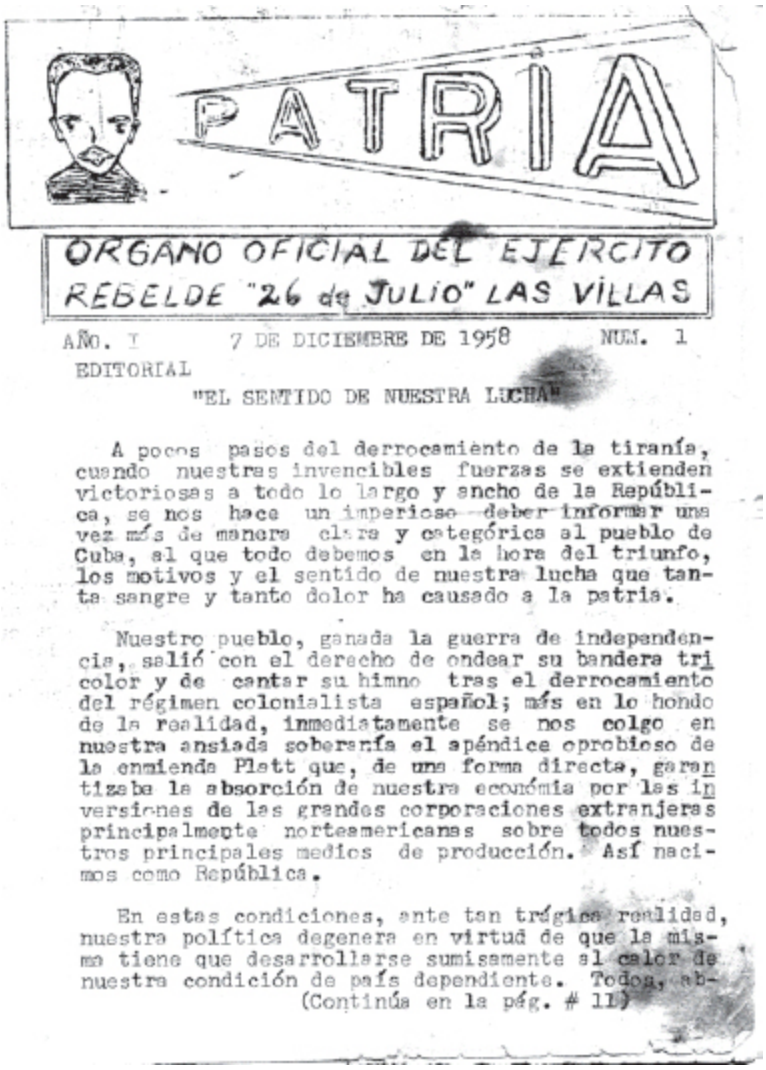
..Nadie que no sea miembro de una institución revolucionaria tiene derecho a portar armas en este territorio. No se permite a individuo alguno, sea o no miembro de alguna institución revolucionaria ingerir bebidas alcoholicas en establecimientos publicos. Los miembros de este Movimiento que incumplimenten esta disposición serán sometidos a consejos de guerra, los miembros de otras organizaciones que lo hagan serán advertidos por primera vez y luego desarmados y enviados a sus respectivas comandancias. Cualquier hecho de sangre derivado del incumplimiento de esta disposición cae bajo la jurisdicción del codigo penal del Ejército revolucionario.

Se ruega a los jefes y oficiales de otras organizaciones que operan en esta zona solicitar a las autoridades del Movimiento cualquier articulo de consumo o material de transporte que necesiten y que este involucrado en los primeros parrafos de esta órden militar con la seguridad de que seran atendidos con fraternidad revolucionarias, haciendo este ruego para mejor administración de la zona.

Todo delito, militar o civil, cometido en los limites del territorio administrativo encuadrado en esta órden, queda bajo la jurisdicción de nuestros codigos respectivos.

Comandante en jefe de la Región de las Villas
Por el movimiento "26 de Julio"

Military Order No. 1, November 8, 1958, issued by Che Guevara as commander-in-chief of the July 26 Movement in Las Villas.



PATRIA

ORGANO OFICIAL DEL EJERCITO REBELDE "26 de JULIO" LAS VILLAS

AÑO. I 7 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1958 NUM. 1

EDITORIAL

"EL SENTIDO DE NUESTRA LUCHA"

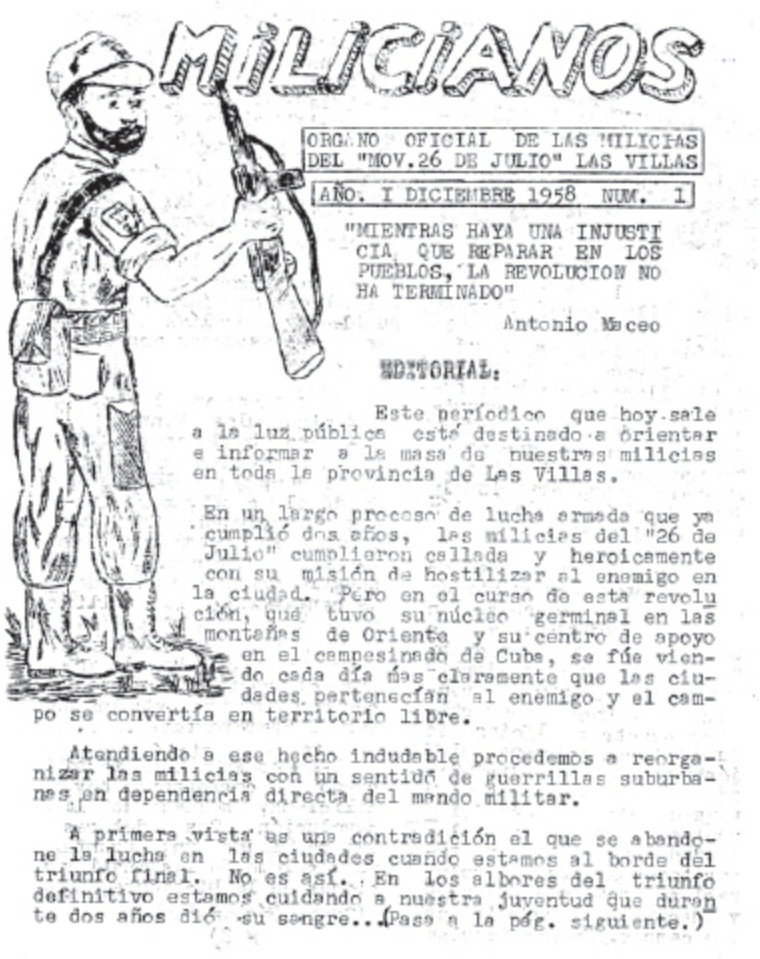
A pocos pasos del derrocamiento de la tiranía, cuando nuestras invencibles fuerzas se extienden victoriosas a todo lo largo y ancho de la República, se nos hace un imperioso deber informar una vez más de manera clara y categórica al pueblo de Cuba, al que todo debemos en la hora del triunfo, los motivos y el sentido de nuestra lucha que tanta sangre y tanto dolor ha causado a la patria.

Nuestro pueblo, ganada la guerra de independencia, salió con el derecho de ondear su bandera tricolor y de cantar su himno tras el derrocamiento del régimen colonialista español; más en lo hondo de la realidad, inmediatamente se nos colgo en nuestra ansiada soberanía el apéndice oprobioso de la enmienda Platt que, de una forma directa, garantizaba la absorción de nuestra economía por las inversiones de las grandes corporaciones extranjeras principalmente norteamericanas sobre todos nuestros principales medios de producción. Así nacimos como República.

En estas condiciones, ante tan trágica realidad, nuestra política degenera en virtud de que la misma tiene que desarrollarse sumisamente al calor de nuestra condición de país dependiente. Todos, ab-

(Continúa en la pág. # 11)

Facsimile of *Patria*, the newspaper of the July 26 Movement in Las Villas province.



MILICIANOS

ORGANO OFICIAL DE LAS MILICIAS DEL "MOV.26 DE JULIO" LAS VILLAS

AÑO. I DICIEMBRE 1958 NUM. 1

"MIENTRAS HAYA UNA INJUSTICIA QUE REPARAR EN LOS PUEBLOS, LA REVOLUCION NO HA TERMINADO"

Antonio Maceo

EDITORIAL:

Este periódico que hoy sale a la luz pública está destinado a orientar e informar a la masa de nuestras milicias en toda la provincia de Las Villas.

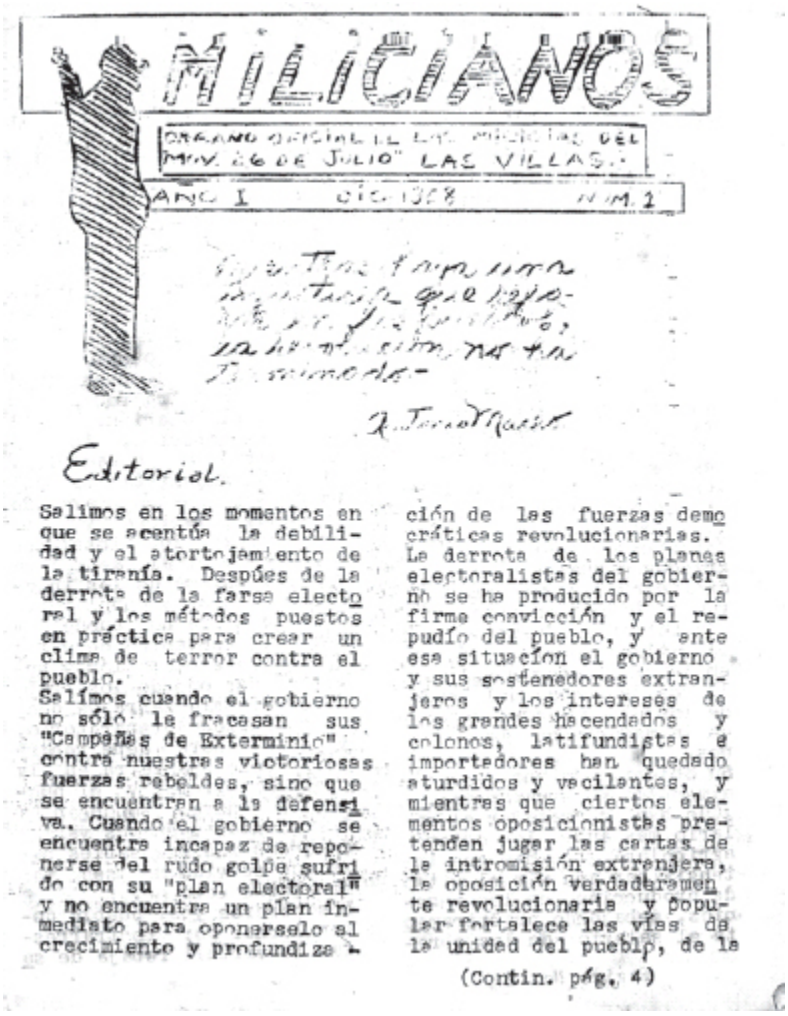
En un largo proceso de lucha armada que ya cumplió dos años, las milicias del "26 de Julio" cumplieron callada y heroicamente con su misión de hostilizar al enemigo en la ciudad. Pero en el curso de esta revolución, que tuvo su núcleo germinal en las montañas de Oriente y su centro de apoyo en el campesinado de Cuba, se fúe viendo cada día más claramente que las ciudades pertenecían al enemigo y el campo se convertía en territorio libre.

Atendiendo a ese hecho indudable procedemos a reorganizar las milicias con un sentido de guerrillas suburbanas en dependencia directa del mando militar.

A primera vista es una contradición el que se abandone la lucha en las ciudades cuando estamos al borde del triunfo final. No es así. En los albores del triunfo definitivo estamos cuidando a nuestra juventud que durante dos años dió su sangre... (Pase a la pág. siguiente.)

(1 of 2)

Facsimiles of *Milicianos*, the newspaper of the July 26 Movement militias in Las Villas province.



MILICIANOS

ORGANO OFICIAL DE LAS MILICIAS DEL M.N. 26 DE JULIO" LAS VILLAS."

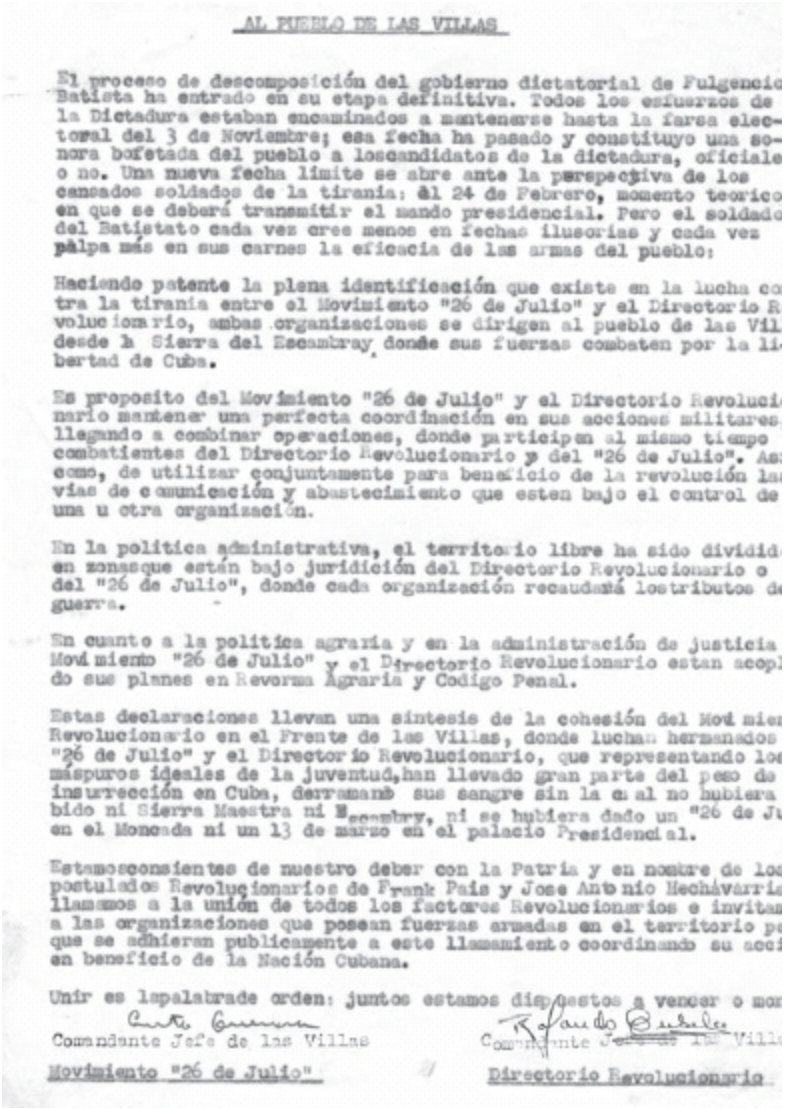
AÑO I OCT. 1958 NUM. 1

Editorial.

Salimos en los momentos en que se acentúa la debilidad y el atortojamiento de la tiranía. Despúes de la derrota de la farsa electoral y los métodos puestos en práctica para crear un clima de terror contra el pueblo.

Salímos cuando el gobierno no sólo le fracasan sus "Campañas de Exterminio" contra nuestras victoriosas fuerzas rebeldes, sino que se encuentran a la defensiva. Cuando el gobierno se encuentra incapaz de reponerse del rudo golpe sufrido con su "plan electoral" y no encuentra un plan inmediato para oponerselo al crecimiento y profundización de las fuerzas democráticas revolucionarias. La derrota de los planes electoralistas del gobierno se ha producido por la firme convicción y el repudío del pueblo, y ante esa situación el gobierno y sus sostenedores extranjeros y los intereses de los grandes hacendados y colonos, latifundistas e importadores han quedado aturdidos y vacilantes, y mientras que ciertos elementos oposicionistas pretenden jugar las cartas de la intromisión extranjera, la oposición verdaderamente revolucionaria y popular fortalece las vías de la unidad del pueblo, de la

(Contin. pág. 4)



AL PUEBLO DE LAS VILLAS

El proceso de descomposición del gobierno dictatorial de Fulgencio Batista ha entrado en su etapa definitiva. Todos los esfuerzos de la Dictadura estaban encaminados a mantenerse hasta la farsa electoral del 3 de Noviembre; esa fecha ha pasado y constituyo una sonora bofetada del pueblo a loscandidatos de la dictadura, oficiales o no. Una nueva fecha límite se abre ante la perspectiva de los cansados soldados de la tiranía: al 24 de Febrero, momento teorico en que se deberá transmitir el mando presidencial. Pero el soldado del Batistato cada vez cree menos en fechas ilusorias y cada vez palpa más en sus carnes la eficacia de las armas del pueblo:

Haciendo patente la plena identificación que existe en la lucha contra la tiranía entre el Movimiento "26 de Julio" y el Directorio Revolucionario, ambas organizaciones se dirigen al pueblo de las Villas desde la Sierra del Escambray donde sus fuerzas combaten por la libertad de Cuba.

Es proposito del Movimiento "26 de Julio" y el Directorio Revolucionario mantener una perfecta coordinación en sus acciones militares, llegando a combinar operaciones, donde participen al mismo tiempo combatientes del Directorio Revolucionario y del "26 de Julio". Así como, de utilizar conjuntamente para beneficio de la revolución las vias de comunicación y abastecimiento que esten bajo el control de una u otra organización.

En la politica administrativa, el territorio libre ha sido dividido en zonasque están bajo jurisdición del Directorio Revolucionario o del "26 de Julio", donde cada organización recaudará lostributos de guerra.

En cuanto a la politica agraria y en la administración de justicia, Movimiento "26 de Julio" y el Directorio Revolucionario estan acoplado sus planes en Reforma Agraria y Codigo Penal.

Estas declaraciones llevan una síntesis de la cohesión del Movimiento Revolucionario en el Frente de las Villas, donde luchan hermanados "26 de Julio" y el Directorio Revolucionario, que representando los máspuros ideales de la juventud,han llevado gran parte del peso de la insurrección en Cuba, derramando sus sangre sin la cual no hubiera sido ni Sierra Maestra ni Escambry, ni se hubiera dado un "26 de Julio en el Moncada ni un 13 de marzo en el palacio Presidencial.

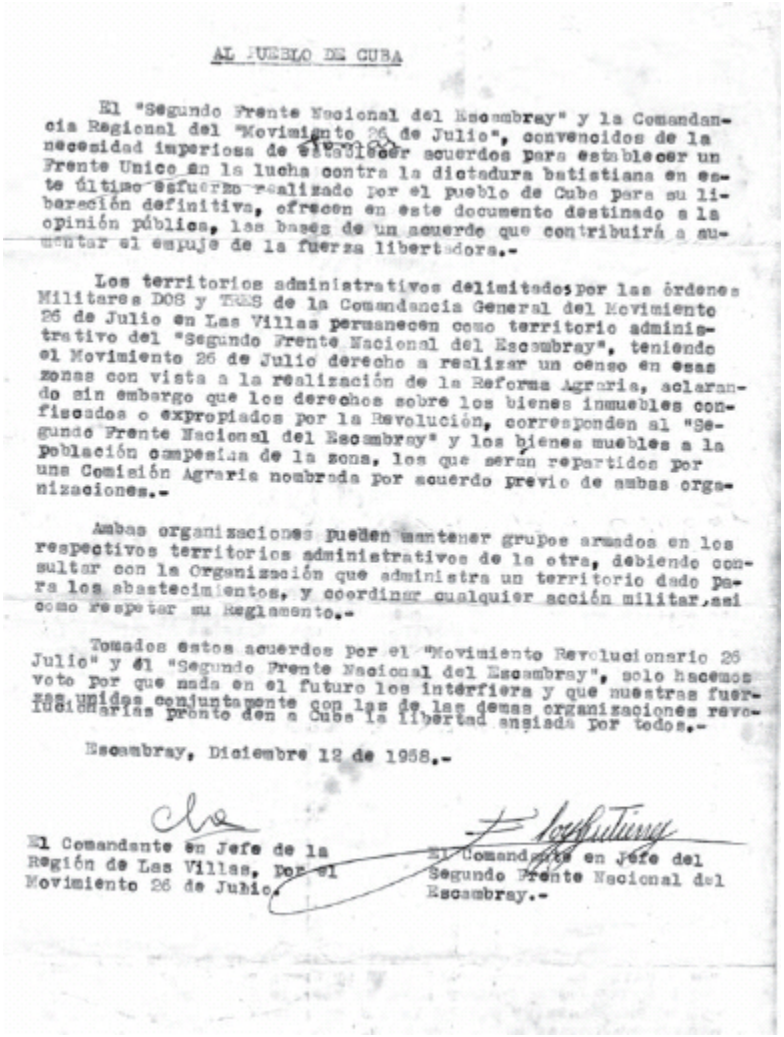
Estamosconsientes de nuestro deber con la Patria y en nombre de los postulados Revolucionarios de Frank País y Jose Antonio Hechávarria llamamos a la unión de todos los factores Revolucionarios e invitamos a las organizaciones que posean fuerzas armadas en el territorio para que se adhieran publicamente a este llamamiento coordinando su acción en beneficio de la Nación Cubana.

Unir es lapalabrade orden: juntos estamos dispuestos a vencer o morir

Comandante Jefe de las Villas
Movimiento "26 de Julio"

Comandante Jefe de las Villas
Directorio Revolucionario

Facsimile of the Pact of El Pedrero, signed on December 1, 1958, by Che Guevara for the July 26 Movement and Rolando Cubela for the Revolutionary Directorate.



AL PUEBLO DE CUBA

El "Segundo Frente Nacional del Escambray" y la Comandancia Regional del "Movimiento 26 de Julio", convencidos de la necesidad imperiosa de establecer acuerdos para establecer un Frente Unico en la lucha contra la dictadura batistiana en este último esfuerzo realizado por el pueblo de Cuba para su liberación definitiva, ofrecen en este documento destinado a la opinión pública, las bases de un acuerdo que contribuirá a aumentar el empuje de la fuerza libertadora.-

Los territorios administrativos delimitados por las órdenes Militares DOS y TRES de la Comandancia General del Movimiento 26 de Julio en Las Villas permanecen como territorio administrativo del "Segundo Frente Nacional del Escambray", teniendo el Movimiento 26 de Julio derecho a realizar un censo en esas zonas con vista a la realización de la Reforma Agraria, aclarando sin embargo que los derechos sobre los bienes inmuebles confiscados o expropiados por la Revolución, corresponden al "Segundo Frente Nacional del Escambray" y los bienes muebles a la población campesina de la zona, los que serán repartidos por una Comisión Agraria nombrada por acuerdo previo de ambas organizaciones.-

Ambas organizaciones pueden mantener grupos armados en los respectivos territorios administrativos de la otra, debiendo consultar con la Organización que administra un territorio dado para los abastecimientos, y coordinar cualquier acción militar, así como respetar su Reglamento.-

Tomados estos acuerdos por el "Movimiento Revolucionario 26 Julio" y el "Segundo Frente Nacional del Escambray", solo hacemos voto por que nada en el futuro los interfiera y que nuestras fuerzas unidas conjuntamente con las de las demas organizaciones revolucionarias pronto den a Cuba la libertad anhelada por todos.-

Escambray, Diciembre 12 de 1958.-

El Comandante en Jefe de la Región de Las Villas, por el Movimiento 26 de Julio.

El Comandante en Jefe del Segundo Frente Nacional del Escambray.-

Unity Pact signed on December 12, 1958, by Che Guevara for the July 26 Movement and Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo for the Second Front of the Escambray.

Letter from Lidia Doce to Che Guevara

My dear commander,

How are you? Do you still remember me? Well I haven't been able to stop thinking of you for one moment, always waiting for the mail to see if you've written me, I think you will have already received the camera and are pleased with me. I want to remind you of something, perhaps you have forgotten, in Las Vegas you offered me a pistol, and I think you forgot. I need it now here in Havana because I don't have one. When are you going to send for me? I wait for you, my dear commander, and I am waiting for them to deliver the uniforms as I don't know where they are going to be sent. I am struggling here, although I'm unhappy because I don't have my commander here to give me orders, and to understand what I have to do, so I am organizing women. It's called the July 26 Women's Group. What do you think? I have a lot of work, it's too much for me on my own because, since [Delio Gómez] Ochoa left [for the mountains], I've been very much on my own; tell me if you received what I requested in Bayamo, that is, plates, pots and everything you needed in your command post. But by God send for me soon! Because I want to see you and give you a big hug just as you deserve, even if I don't.

Send my warm regards to Gile [Israel Pardo Guerra] and Miguel [Álvarez]. I've got a very fierce German puppy for you, its parents are champions from New York. Would you like it? I hope so. Receive the strongest embrace possible.

Always your

Lydia

Glossary

ACEVEDO GONZÁLEZ, ENRIQUE: Born in Placetas, Las Villas, on August 12, 1942. He joined the Rebel Army in July 1957 as a member of Column Four. He was later a member of Che's Column Eight.

ACEVEDO GONZÁLEZ, ROGELIO: Born in Placetas, Las Villas, in 1941. He joined the Rebel Army in July 1957 as a member of Column Four. He was later a member of Che's Column Eight and attained the rank of commander.

ACOSTA ESPINOSA, JULIO ZENÓN: Born in Veguitas, Oriente province, on May 8, 1912. He was an activist in the July 26 Movement and a combatant in the Rebel Army. He joined Column One in January 1957 and died February 9, 1957, in the battle at Altos de Espinosa.

ACOSTA FERRALS, CLODOMIRA: Born in Cayajal, Vara, in 1937. She was a member of the July 26 Movement and joined the Rebel Army as a courier for Column One. On September 12, 1958, she was captured while on a mission to Havana. She was tortured and murdered.

ACUÑA, SERGIO: Combatant in Column One of the Rebel Army. He participated in the battle at La Plata. He subsequently deserted and was assassinated by the head of Batista's army, Santiago Roselló, in San Lorenzo, Oriente province.

ACUÑA NÚÑEZ, JUAN VITALIO (*VILO*): Peasant from the Sierra Maestra, born in Purial de Vicana, Oriente province, on January 27, 1925. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One in April 1957. He was subsequently a member of Columns Four and Three on the Third Front. In November 1958 he was promoted to the rank of commander. He held various posts in the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) after the triumph of the revolution in January 1959, and was a founding member of the central committee of the Cuban Communist Party. He was part of the National Liberation Army (ELN) led by Che Guevara in Bolivia, and died in an ambush in Vado de Puerto Mauricio, in the Río Grande, Bolivia, August 31, 1967.

ACUÑA SÁNCHEZ, MANUEL EUSEBIO: Born in Niquero, Oriente province, on December 16, 1908. He joined the Rebel Army in Cinco Palmas on December 25, 1956. He was wounded in the attack on El Uvero.

ALARCÓN CABRALES, RIGOBERTO: Born in Media Luna, Oriente province, on May 25, 1932. He was a member of Column Eight and died in combat on December 9, 1958.

ALARCÓN REYES, JUVENTINO: Born in Campechuela, Oriente province, on May 14, 1930. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and was one of

the first to join the Rebel Army's Column One. He attained the rank of lieutenant and died in the attack at Palma Mocha, August 19, 1957.

ALBENTOSA CHACÓN, ÁNGEL EMILIO: Born May 3, 1920, in Santiago de Cuba. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. A *Granma* expeditionary, he became an underground activist after being wounded at Alegría de Pío.

ALMEIDA BOSQUE, JUAN: Born in Havana, February 17, 1927. He participated in the Moncada attack and was subsequently imprisoned. He became an expeditionary on the *Granma* and attained the rank of commander in February 1958. He was the leader of the Third Front and became a commander of the revolution.

AMEIJEIRAS DELGADO, EFIGENIO: Born in Puerto Padre, Las Tunas, September 21, 1931. He was an expeditionary on the *Granma* and a member of Column One, and later leader of Column Six on the Second Front. He attained the rank of commander.

ARIAS SOTOMAYOR, JOSÉ: Born in Niquero, Oriente province, on May 3, 1933. He was a member of Column Four and founder of the Second Front in Column Six. He attained the rank of captain.

BANDERAS MACEO, TEODORO: Born in Majaguabo del Medio, San Luis, in 1930. He was a member of the Rebel Army and died in combat in the battle at El Jigüe on July 19, 1958.

BARRERAS, LUIS (*EL MAESTRO*/"THE TEACHER"): He joined the Rebel Army on February 17, 1957, and fought in the battle of El Uvero. He deserted the Rebel Army and was captured and tried for immoral conduct. He was executed on October 28, 1957.

BENÍTEZ NÁPOLES, REINALDO: Born in Bayamo, Oriente province, on April 25, 1928. He participated in the Moncada attack and was captured and imprisoned. As a *Granma* expeditionary, after the ambush at Alegría de Pío, he became part of Almeida's group on December 21, 1956. He was captured in March 1957 and imprisoned in Manzanillo until the triumph of the revolution.

BERMÚDEZ RODRÍGUEZ, CARLOS: Born in Placetas, Las Villas, on August 7, 1933. He was a *Granma* expeditionary and after the dispersal at Alegría de Pío, he rejoined the Rebel Army on December 27, 1956, but shortly afterwards, on account of illness, he went to Havana, where he was active in the underground movement until the triumph of the revolution.

BORDÓN MACHADO, VÍCTOR: Born in Quemado de Güines, Las Villas, in 1930. A member of the Orthodox Party Youth and later the July 26 Movement, he participated in the April 9, 1958, strike and was an outstanding leader of the movement in the eastern zone of Las Villas province. He joined Column Eight in October 1958.

BORRERO FONSECA, MARCOS: Born in El Cobre, Santiago de Cuba, on April 25, 1917. A member of the July 26 Movement, he was active in the underground until he joined the Rebel Army on the First Front. He was later part of Column Eight. He died in combat at La Federal farm, Camagüey, on September 9, 1958.

BUCH RODRÍGUEZ, LUIS M.: Lawyer and member of the July 26 Movement. He was in exile in Venezuela and was a signatory to the Caracas Pact (August, 1958).

CABRERA PUPO, FRANCISCO (*PACO*): Born in Puerto Padre, Las Tunas, on December 5, 1924. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army in Column One, and he later joined Column Four. He died in Venezuela on January 27, 1959.

CAPOTE RODRÍGUEZ, GILBERTO FRANCISCO: Born in Pinar del Río on January 26, 1928. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and joined Column Four on the First Front of the Rebel Army. He died in combat in the second battle of Pino del Agua on February 16, 1958.

CARDERO MARTÍ, HERMES GILBERTO: Born in Pilón, Oriente province, on March 18, 1927. He was a peasant guide in the Sierra Maestra. He joined the Rebel Army in Column Seven on the First Front and later transferred to Column Six on the Second Front.

CARDERO SÁNCHEZ, GILBERTO ANTONIO: Born in Pilón, Oriente province, October 1, 1930. He joined the Rebel Army in Column Seven on the First Front, and later Columns Six and 19, both on the Second Front.

CARRERAS ZAYAS, JESÚS: Commander of the Second Front of the Escambray. After the 1959 revolution, he joined the counterrevolutionary forces. He was captured, tried and executed.

CASTRO MERCADER, RAÚL H.: Born in Puerto Padre, Las Tunas, January 11, 1937. A member of the July 26 Movement, he joined the Rebel Army as part of the first group (*los Marabuzaleros*)[1] sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra in March 1957. He fought in Columns One and Four, and in August 1957 he became a captain in Che Guevara's column.

CASTRO RUZ, FIDEL (*ALEJANDO*) (b. 1926): A student leader at the University of Havana in the 1940s, he joined the revolutionary youth of the Cuban People's Party (Orthodox) in 1947. He was a candidate for that party in the 1952 elections that were called off after Batista's coup in March of that year. He led the July 26, 1953, assault on the Moncada military barracks in Santiago de Cuba and Bayamo. He was captured and sentenced to 15 years in prison. His defense speech at his trial in October 1953 was published as "History will absolve me" and became the program of the July 26 Movement, of which he was the founder. He was the commander-in-chief of the *Granma* expedition and he was general secretary of the July 26 Movement from May 1958. From 1959 to 1976, Fidel Castro was the prime minister of Cuba, and after 1976 he was the president of the Council of State and Ministers. He was also commander-in-chief of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces until 2006.

CASTRO RUZ, RAÚL (b. 1931): Student leader at the University of Havana, he participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks in July 1953, leading a group of seven men who took over the Palacio de Justicia. He was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment but was amnestied in May 1955. He was a founder of the July 26 Movement and a *Granma* expeditionary. He became a commander in February 1958 and led the Frank País Second Front in Oriente province. After January 1959 he became the military chief of Oriente province and subsequently the chief of the FAR. From 1959 to 1976 he was vice-prime minister and later vice-president of the Council of State and Ministers. He is currently the president of Cuba and the first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC).

CHAO SANTANA, RAFAEL: Born in Caimito, Havana, September 4, 1914. He was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and a *Granma* expeditionary. He was a member of Column One on the First Front,. After the December 5, 1956, ambush at Alegría de Pío, he was reunited with the other guerrillas on December 22. On May 1, 1957, he left the Sierra Maestra because of illness and was active in the underground movement until the revolution.

CHIBÁS RIVAS, RAÚL: He was a member of the Cuban People's Party (Orthodox) and the brother of that party's leader, Eduardo Chibás. He was a signatory to the Sierra Manifesto in 1957. He joined the Rebel Army in Column One on the First Front and he attained the rank of commander. After the revolution, he left Cuba and went to live in the United States.

CHOMÓN MEDIAVILLA, FAURE (b. 1929): Leader of the Revolutionary Directorate and a participant in the attack on the presidential palace on March 13, 1957. In February 1958, he returned to Cuba, as part of an armed group on board the cabin cruiser *Scapade*, and organized an effective guerrilla unit in the Escambray mountains that ultimately fused with the Rebel Army in Las Villas. He attained the rank of commander. He collaborated with Che's column and signed the Pact of El Pedrero on December 1, 1958.

CIENFUEGOS GORRIARÁN, CAMILO: Born in Havana on February 6, 1932. He was a *Granma* expeditionary and was a member of Rebel Army Columns One and Four. He led the first group of rebel fighters to extend the guerrilla war to the plains of Oriente province. He attained the rank of commander on April 16, 1958, as leader of Column Two. In January 1959 he was appointed as chief of the Rebel Army. He died in an airplane accident on October 28, 1959.

CUBELA SECADE, ROLANDO (b. 1933): Student activist and member of the Revolutionary Directorate in the Escambray mountains. He fought alongside Ernesto Che Guevara in the Las Villas campaign. He was president of the Federation of University Students (FEU) in 1959. He was recruited by the CIA on a trip to Madrid and given the assignment of assassinating Fidel Castro. He was arrested and tried by a revolutionary tribunal. On his release from prison, he went to Spain.

CUERVO NAVARRO, PELAYO GENARO: Born in Baracoa, Guantánamo province, on September 30, 1901. He was an outstanding lawyer and leader of the Orthodox Party. He was assassinated by Batista's forces a few hours after the March 13, 1957, attack on the presidential palace.

DÍAZ FERNÁNDEZ, JESÚS: He was a member of the July 26 Movement in Holguín and a member of the Rebel Army in Column 12 on the Fourth Front.

DÍAZ FONTAINE, EMILIANO ALBERTO (*NANO*): Born in Santiago de Cuba on September 6, 1936. Along with Frank País, he was a founder of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba, and he participated in the November 30 uprising. He joined the Rebel Army in the first group sent to the Sierra Maestra by Frank País (*los Marabuzaleros*). He died in the battle of El Uvero, May 28, 1957.

DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, JULIO (*JULITO*): Born in Artemisa, Havana, on May 23, 1929. He participated in the Moncada attack and was captured, tried and

imprisoned. He went into exile in Mexico and was a *Granma* expeditionary. He was killed in the battle of El Uvero, May 28, 1957, having reached the rank of captain.

DÍAZ GONZÁLEZ, PABLO: Born in Calabazar de Sagua, Las Villas, on June 29, 1912. He was the representative of the July 26 Movement in New York and a *Granma* expeditionary. After the ambush at Alegría de Pío, he went into hiding and on December 21, 1956, he made it to Havana. He later went to the United States, where he continued collaborating with the revolutionary movement by collecting funds and arms for the Rebel Army.

DÍAZ TORRES, RAÚL: A *Granma* expeditionary, who, after the ambush at Alegría de Pío, managed to rejoin the Rebel Army on February 17, 1957. He fought on the First and Second Fronts. He attained the rank of captain by the end of the war.

DOCE SÁNCHEZ, LIDIA: Born in Velazco, Holguín, on August 27, 1912. She was a member of the July 26 Movement and joined the Rebel Army's Columns One and Four as a courier. She was captured, tortured and died on September 12, 1958.

DOMÍNGUEZ LÓPEZ, GUILLERMO: Born in Delicias, Puerto Padre, Las Tunas, on June 30, 1932. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and joined the Rebel Army as part of the first group of combatants sent by Frank País. He attained the rank of lieutenant, but was captured and assassinated in Pino del Agua on May 17, 1957.

DUQUE GUELMES, FÉLIX: Born in Sancti Spíritus on June 2, 1931. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One on the First Front and later joined Column Nine on the Second Front. He attained the rank of commander on December 28, 1958.

ECHEVARRÍA MARTÍNEZ, JUAN FRANCISCO (*EL BIZCO*): A member of the first group of combatants sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He fought on the First Front of the Rebel Army. He was sanctioned for gross conduct incompatible with that of a rebel soldier and shot in October 1957.

ECHEVERRÍA BIANCHI, JOSÉ ANTONIO JESÚS DEL CARMEN (*MANZANITA*): Born in Cárdenas, Matanzas, on July 16, 1932. He was a leader of the student movement and a key opponent of the Batista dictatorship. He was general secretary of the FEU from 1953 to 1954 and was also president of the Congress of Latin American Students. He founded the Revolutionary Directorate and, in 1956, with Fidel Castro, signed the *Carta de Mexico*. He

led the attack on the office of Radio Reloj during the March 13, 1957, assault on the presidential palace. He died in an armed clash with police during that attack.

ENRÍQUEZ, SALUSTIANO DE LA CRUZ (*CRUCITO*): Mistakenly called José de la Cruz in Che's diary. An outstanding member of Column Four, he died in combat at the first battle of Pino de Agua on September 17, 1957.

ERMUS GONZÁLEZ, ENRIQUE: A member of the July 26 Movement who joined the First Front along with the first group of combatants sent to the Sierra Maestra by Frank País (*los Marabuzaleros*). He was responsible for the rebels' prison at Puerto Malanga in the Sierra Maestra. He attained the rank of captain. He died in Santiago de Cuba on January 24, 1977.

ESCALONA ALONSO, DERMIDIO: He joined the Rebel Army on the First Front. He was part of the group from Holguín that joined forces with Fidel in June 1957. He was an outstanding combatant in the second battle of Pino del Agua and at El Blanquizal. He was given the role of opening the guerrilla front in the mountains of Los Órganos, Pinar del Río, in May 1958, where he was wounded and transferred to Havana. He attained the rank of commander by the end of the revolutionary war.

ESCALONA CHÁVEZ, MANUEL ENRIQUE (*QUIQUE*) (b. 1936): Born in Manzanillo, he was a member of the July 26 Movement. He joined the Rebel Army on the First Front and was wounded in the battle of El Uvero; he attained the rank of lieutenant. He worked in the underground movement in Santiago de Cuba with René Ramos Latour (*Daniel*). He was captured, but released. He went into exile in the United States until the revolution.

ESCUDERO MARTÍNEZ, MANUEL: A peasant from the Sierra Maestra and Che's first courier, he was a combatant of the Rebel Army.

ESPÍN GUILLOIS, VILMA (*DÉBORAH*): Born in Santiago de Cuba on April 7, 1930. She was a member of Frank País's group that fused with the July 26 Movement and she became a member of its national leadership. She participated in the November 30 uprising and later became the coordinator of the movement in Oriente province. In July 1958 she joined the Rebel Army in Column Six on the Second Front. After the revolution, she devoted herself to the movement for women's rights, and in 1960 she was elected as the first president of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), a position she held until her death in 2007.

FAJARDO RIVERO, MANUEL EUGENIO (*PITI*): Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, on November 8, 1930. A doctor, he joined the Rebel Army's

Column One and later transferred to Column 12 on the Fourth Front. He attained the rank of commander. He died in a clash with counterrevolutuionary forces in the Escambray mountains on November 29, 1960, when he was head of the peasant militia in that area.

FAJARDO SOTOMAYOR, MANUEL ENRIQUE: Born on March 18, 1932, in Niquero, Oriente province. He was one of the first peasants to join the Rebel Army in 1957 on the First Front. He later fought on the Second Front and attained the rank of commander. He died in 1995.

FAJARDO SOTOMAYOR, ROBERTO: Born in Niquero, Oriente. He joined the Rebel Army on April 1, 1957, initially in Column One, and later he transferred to Column 32 on the Fourth Front. He attained the rank of commander.

FERNÁNDEZ FONT, MARCELO (1932–2009): Born in Havana he was a leader of the July 26 Movement urban underground and a member of its national leadership and national coordinator from May 1958 to 1960. After the revolution he took various roles, including as minister of foreign trade and president of the National Bank.

FIALLO BARRERO, RAMÓN QUINTILIANO (*FIALLITO*): Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, on October 31, 1936. He was a member of the Cuban People's Party (Orthodox) and later of the July 26 Movement. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One and later transferred to Column Six on the Second Front. He attained the rank of captain by the end of the war.

FLEITAS, ARMANDO: Along with Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, he was the leader of the Second National Front of the Escambray. In 1961 he went into exile in the United States.

FONSECA LÓPEZ, PAULINO: Born in Dos Bocas de Cardero, Pilón, Oriente province, on June 22, 1932. On March 25, 1957, he joined Column Four in Altos de Espinosa and was Che's adjutant. He attained the rank of first lieutenant by the end of the war.

FONSECA PRADO, ARQUÍMEDES: Born in Minas de Bueycito on October 24, 1935. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. He joined the Rebel Army's Column Four, later transferring to Column 10 on the Second Front. By the end of the war he had attained the rank of first lieutenant.

FRANQUI MESA, CARLOS (1921–2010): A journalist and member of the Communist Party during the 1940s. He joined the July 26 Movement at the end of the 1950s and helped to edit its underground newspaper *Revolución*. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One and worked on *El Cubano Libre*

and Radio Rebelde in the Sierra Maestra. In January 1959 he became editor of the magazine *Revolución* until 1965. He was the director of the Council of State Office of Historical Affairs, but left Cuba in 1968 and became an outspoken critic of the revolution.

FRÍAS CABRERA, CIRO (*EL MORITO*): Born in Ensenada, Bayamo, on December 10, 1928. He was a peasant who joined the Rebel Army in Column One and later transferred to Column 18 on the Second Front. He attained the rank of captain. He died in combat during the siege of the barracks of Imías on April 10, 1958, and was posthumously given the rank of commander.

FRÍAS ROBLEJO, ÁNGEL (1940–69): Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One and later fought in Column Eight.

GARCÍA DÍAZ, ANDRÉS (1928–88): Born in Havana on October 30, 1928. He participated in the attack on the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks in Bayamo on July 26, 1953. He was captured, tortured and imprisoned. After the amnesty, he became a member of the July 26 Movement, joining the Rebel Army's Column One in 1957. Later he fought on the Second Front and attained the rank of captain.

GARCÍA FRÍAS, GUILLERMO: Born in El Plátano, Niquero, Oriente province, on February 10, 1928. He was one of the first peasants to join the Rebel Army's Column One. He was later a founding combatant on the Second Front and attained the rank of commander in 1958. After the revolution he held various positions in the FAR; he was a member of the Cuban Communist Party's central committee (1965-91); he was minister of transport (1974-85); and is currently a member of the Council of State. He is a commander of the revolution.

GARCÍA MARTÍNEZ, CALIXTO (1931–2010): Born in Los Arabas, Matanzas, on December 27, 1931. He participated in the attack on the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes barracks in Bayamo in July 1953. Exiled in Costa Rica, Honduras and Mexico, he joined the *Granma* expedition and became a member of Column One. Later, he attained the rank of commander on the Third Front.

GOENAGA BARRÓN, ARNALDO: A veteran of World War II, he was decorated by the US government. He became a founding member of the July 26 Movement in New York and organized the *Orión* expedition.

GÓMEZ OCHOA, DELIO (*MARCOS*): Born in Cacocum, Holguín, on September 18, 1929. A combatant of the Rebel Army, he fought in Column One and

attained the rank of commander on April 19, 1958. After the failed general strike of April 9, 1958, he became coordinator of the July 26 Movement in Havana, but he was arrested. He later returned to the Sierra Maestra and resumed command of the Fourth Front.

GONZÁLEZ HERNÁNDEZ, FRANCISCO (*PANCHO*) (1928–94): Born in Havana on December 31, 1928. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks and was captured and imprisoned. Later he was a *Granma* expeditionary, but after he was wounded as a Rebel Army combatant on May 25, 1957, he went underground until the triumph of the revolution.

GUERRA GONZÁLEZ, ORESTES: Born in Calambrosio, Oriente province, March 15, 1932. He joined the Rebel Army's Columns One and Four. He was part of Column Two, which extended the struggle to central Cuba, and attained the rank of captain.

GUERRA PÉREZ, ANDRÉS ARÍSTIDES (*NONITO*): Combatant in Column Four of the Rebel Army.

GUEVARA, ÁNGEL (b. 1930): He joined the Rebel Army's Column Four. He died on February 23, 1958, as a result of wounds received in the second battle of Pino del Agua.

GUEVARA DE LA SERNA, ERNESTO (CHE): Born in Rosario, Argentina, on June 14, 1928. He met Fidel Castro in Mexico in July 1955 and immediately enlisted in the *Granma* expedition to initiate the armed struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship. He was the first commander appointed in the Rebel Army. He led Columns Four and Eight, directing the victorious battle of Santa Clara. After the revolution, he had many responsibilities, including as head of the department of industrialization of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA), president of the National Bank, minister of industry and the central planning organization. In 1965 he participated in the national liberation struggle in the Congo and the following year he arrived in Bolivia to carry out another internationalist mission. He was captured on October 8, 1967, and assassinated the next day.

GUTIÉRREZ, DALCIO: Combatant of the Rebel Army's Column Eight. He died in combat on September 9, 1958, in La Federal, Camagüey province.

GUTIÉRREZ MENOYO, ELOY: Member of the Revolutionary Directorate and commander of the Second National Front of the Escambray that was established on November 10, 1957. He refused to cooperate with the Rebel Army in Las Villas until December 1958, when he signed a pact of

collaboration. After the revolution, he went into exile in the United States. In 1965, he returned to Cuba clandestinely (near Baracoa) and was captured by the militia and sentenced to 30 years in prison. He was released in 1968 and went to the United States.

GUTIÉRREZ MONTERO, ONIRIA: Combatant of the Rebel Army. He was a member of Column Four and later fought on the Second Front. He died on August 18, 1971.

HART DÁVALOS, ARMANDO: Born in Havana on June 13, 1930. As a young lawyer he joined the Orthodox Youth in 1947 and became a member of the National Revolutionary Movement led by Rafael García Bárcenas. He was a founding member of the July 26 Movement and a member of its executive in Oriente province. He participated in the uprising of November 30 and the first meeting of the July 26 Movement in the Sierra Maestra on February 17, 1957. He was arrested and imprisoned in April 1957, but escaped. He was recaptured in January 1958 and sent to prison on the Isle of Pines where he remained until the revolution. Since January 1959 he has held various posts: minister for education (1959-65); secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) (1965-70); first secretary of the PCC in Oriente; minister for culture; member of the central committee of the PCC and member of the political bureau of the PCC.

HERNÁNDEZ SUÁREZ, JUAN (*GUANCHI*): Member of Column Eight. He died in the battle of Cuatro Compañeros in Vertientes, Camagüey, on September 14, 1958.

HIDALGO BARRIOS, MARIO OLIVERIO: Born in Camagüey, on June 7, 1924. He was a *Granma* expeditionary, but was captured after Alegría de Pío and remained in prison until the revolution.

HURTADO ARBONA, PABLO ARQUÍMEDES (?–1987): He was a member of the July 26 Movement. Exiled to Mexico, he joined the *Granma* expedition, but was wounded and captured at Alegría de Pío and later tortured. He remained in prison until the revolution.

IGLESIA FONSECA, CARLOS JULIO (*NICARAGUA*): Leader of the July 26 Movement and member of its national leadership. He was arrested but later liberated by a rebel commando unit. A member of Column 16 on the Second Front, he attained the rank of commander.

IGLESIAS LEYVA, JOEL (b. 1941): Born in San Luis, Santiago de Cuba. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One in May 1957, and later joined Columns Four and Eight, attaining the rank of captain. After the revolution,

he became the first secretary of the Rebel Youth in recognition of his role as a guerrilla.

INFANTE URIBAZO, ENZO (*BRUNO*): Born on October 30, 1930, in Santiago de Cuba. He was a provincial leader of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba and the November 30 uprising. Later he coordinated the July 26 Movement in Camagüey and was national director of propaganda for the movement. After the Mompié meeting in May 1958 he became the leader of the movement in Havana, but was arrested and remained in prison until January 1, 1959.

JIMÉNEZ LAGE, REYNERIO (1930–87): Born in Santiago de Cuba. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and a combatant in the November 30 uprising. He was part of the first group of fighters sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He joined Column One and later Columns Six and 16 on the Second Front.

LAFERTÉ PÉREZ, EVELIO: An officer in Batista's army, who graduated in early 1958. He was captured by the Rebel Army in the second battle of Pino del Agua on February 16, 1958, and subsequently joined the rebels. He became the director of the recruits' school at Las Minas del Frío. Later he transferred to the general staff and then became director of communications. He attained the rank of captain.

LAMOTHE CORONADO, HUMBERTO: Born in Matanzas on May 1, 1919. He belonged to Joven Cuba, an organization founded by the revolutionary Antonio Guiteras. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. Exiled to Mexico, he returned with the *Granma* expedition. He died at Alegría de Pío, December 5, 1956.

LEYVA FUENTES, ESTANISLAO HERMES (1938–57): Born in Palma Soriano, Santiago de Cuba. A member of Column Four, he died in the battle of El Hombrito on August 29, 1957.

LEYVA REYES, EISLER: Born in Niquero, Oriente province, April 17, 1934. He was a founding member of the July 26 Movement and joined the First Front of the Rebel Army and later transferred to Column Three on the Third Front. He was adjutant to commander Juan Almeida and attained the rank of commander.

LÓPEZ FERNÁNDEZ, ANTONIO (*ÑICO*): Born in La Lisa, Havana, on October 2, 1934. He was active in the student movement (1952–53) and participated in the assault on the Bayamo barracks on July 26, 1953. He escaped arrest and went into exile in Guatemala, where he met Ernesto Che Guevara.

Later in Mexico, he became part of the national leadership of the July 26 Movement. He joined the *Granma* expedition but was assassinated in Boca del Toro on December 8, 1956, after being captured at Alegría del Pío.

LÓPEZ TOMÁS, ENRIQUE: He knew Fidel and Raúl Castro from childhood, as an employee of the neighboring Babún family. He collaborated with the Rebel Army and later joined as a combatant. He died on December 24, 1985.

LUGONES RAMÍREZ, FÉLIX (*PILÓN*) (1934–70): Born in Ensenada de Mora, Pilón, Oriente province, on May 18, 1934. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. He joined Column One and later Column Six on the Second Front. He attained the rank of captain and was named as a commander in January 1959.

LLERENA, MARIO (b. 1913): He was a member of Orthodox Party and also of the Movement of Radical Liberation. He joined the July 26 Movement in New York, where he was president and director of public relations until August 1958. He opposed the radical measures taken by the revolution and returned to the United States in June 1960.

MACEO QUESADA, MARIO: Born in Palma Soriano, Santiago de Cuba, on February 28, 1938. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and part of the first group of fighters sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He joined Columns One and Four and later Column Three on the Third Front. He was captured on a mission in Santiago de Cuba, detained and assassinated at Punta Gorda, August 31, 1958.

MACÍAS ELÍAS, OSCAR: Combatant in Column Eight, but he was later discharged by Che.

MACÍAS SEGURA, LUIS: Combatant of the Rebel Army and a member of Column Three on the Third Front. He died in Pino del Agua on February 16, 1958.

MAGADÁN BARANDITA, JOSÉ RAMÓN (*PEPÍN*): A collaborator, who was later in charge of supplies for the Rebel Army in one of the operational zones. In 1958 he was part of a group of negotiators.

MANALS RODRÍGUEZ, MIGUEL ÁNGEL (*MIKE* OR *VÍCTOR*): Born in Media Luna, Oriente province, on May 8, 1937. He was a member of the first group of combatants sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra and joined Column One. He was wounded in the battle of El Uvero in June 1957. He recovered and went to the Second Front.

MARKS, HERMAN: A North American participant in the Rebel Army on the First Front. He was an instructor at the recruits' school in Las Minas del Frío in 1958 and a member of Column Eight. He led a vanguard platoon and attained the rank of captain.

MÁRQUEZ RODRÍGUEZ, JUAN MANUEL: Born in Havana, on June 15, 1915. He was imprisoned during the 1930s for his opposition to the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. He was a founder and leader of the Orthodox Party and its president in Marianao. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and played an important role in the preparations for the arrival of the *Granma;* he was second-in-command of that expedition. He was assassinated at La Norma farm, San Ramón, Oriente province, on December 16, 1956, after the disembarkation at Las Coloradas.

MARTÍNEZ ÁLVAREZ, JOSÉ RAMÓN: Born in Guanajay, Pinar del Río, on March 28, 1928. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and a Moncada assailant. Seeking asylum in the Panamanian embassy, he went into exile in Costa Rica and later Mexico. He returned to Cuba as part of the *Granma* expedition. He was assassinated in Monte Macahual, Niquero, Oriente province, December 8, 1956.

MARTÍNEZ PÁEZ, JULIO: A doctor who joined the First Front of the Rebel Army. He established La Plata hospital in the Sierra Maestra and became a commander in the Rebel Army. After the revolution he was appointed minister of health.

MAS LÓPEZ, CARLOS (*CARLITOS*): Born in Niquero, Oriente province, on December 4, 1939. On July 3, 1957, he joined Column One of the Rebel Army. He fought in the actions at Santo Domingo and El Naranjo, where he was seriously wounded on July 11, 1958. He died a few days later in La Plata hospital. He had attained the rank of captain.

MASETTI BLANCO, JORGE RICARDO (*SEGUNDO*): Born in Argentina in 1929. He was a journalist who interviewed both Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara in the Sierra Maestra and publicized the guerrilla struggle on radio between April and May 1958. He later founded the press agency Prensa Latina, but died in a guerrilla struggle in the province of Salta, northern Argentina, on September 8, 1964.

MATOS BENÍTEZ, HUBER (b. 1919): Joined the Rebel Army in March 1958 in Column Nine on the Third Front. He attained the rank of commander, and in 1959 was head of the Rebel Army in Camagüey. In October that year he

instigated a counterrevolutionary rebellion. He was captured, tried and sentenced to 30 years in prison for sedition.

MEDINA REYES, RICARDO: Born in Bueycito, Oriente province, on December 31, 1936. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. As part of Column Four he was wounded in an ambush at Minas de Bueycito and assassinated on March 11, 1958.

MENDOZA DÍAZ, ELIGIO (?–1957): Member of the Rebel Army's Column One. He died in the battle of El Uvero on May 28, 1957.

MENDOZA SOTO, FÉLIX BAUTISTA: Born in Cienfuegos on March 10, 1922. He joined Column Four of the Rebel Army, and attained the rank of captain.

MIRET PRIETO, PEDRO (b. 1927): Active participant in preparations for the attack on the Moncada barracks as a member of the military committee. He was wounded in action, captured and sentenced to 13 years in prison. After being amnestied, he went into exile in Mexico and subsequently enrolled to join the *Granma* expedition, but was arrested prior to its departure. In March 1958 he organized another group of rebels, reaching the Sierra Maestra by air. He joined Column One of the Rebel Army, and attained the rank of commander.

MOLL LEYVA, GUSTAVO ADOLFO (1935–57): Born in Caimanera, Guantánamo. He was a member of the July 26 Movement, a combatant in the Rebel Army and a member of the first contingent of fighters sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*) where he joined Column One. He died in the battle of El Uvero, May 28, 1957.

MONTANÉ OROPESA, JESÚS SERGIO (1923–99): Born in Nueva Gerona, Isla de Pinos (today the Isle of Youth), April 15, 1923. He was one of the leaders of the attack on the Moncada barracks. He was captured, tried and imprisoned. Exiled to Mexico he joined the expedition on the *Granma*. After the dispersal at Alegría de Pío he was captured on December 12, 1956, and remained in prison until the revolution.

MORA MORALES, MENELAO: Born in the barrio Río Feo of Pinar del Río on July 22, 1905. He was active in the struggle against the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado. He died in the assault on the presidential palace on March 13, 1957.

MORA PÉREZ, VÍCTOR: He joined the Rebel Army on April 22, 1957. He was a commander and leader of the Camagüey Front. He later opposed the revolution.

MORALES HERNÁNDEZ, CALIXTO: Born in Florida, Camagüey, August 14, 1929. An expeditionary on the *Granma*, he joined Column One. In September 1957 he went to Santiago de Cuba to work with the underground movement there, but rejoined the guerrillas in August 1958 in Las Villas where he was part of Column Eight. He attained the rank of captain.

MORÁN LOSILLA, JOSÉ LORENZO (*EL GALLEGO* /"THE SPANIARD") (1929–57): Born in Camagüey on May 6, 1929. He fought in the Spanish Civil War and was an expeditionary on the *Granma*. He fought on the First Front of the Rebel Army, but was tried and executed in Guantánamo.

MORENO MILIÁN, JOSÉ LORENZO (*MORENITO*): Combatant of the Rebel Army and a member of Column Eight.

MOTOLÁ HERRIMAN, DANIEL (*PITO*): Combatant of the Rebel Army and member of Column One on the First Front.

NARANJO VÁZQUEZ, CRISTINO: Born in Palma Soriano, Santiago de Cuba, on December 15, 1929. An agricultural laborer and miner, he was a member of the July 26 Movement as part of Columns One and Four. Under the command of Camilo Cienfuegos, he went to work in the underground movement in March 1958. He attained the rank of commander of the Rebel Army before he was assassinated by the traitor Manuel Beatón on November 12, 1959, at Ciudad Libertad.

NODA GONZÁLEZ, ENRIQUE: Born in Colón, Matanzas, on September 9, 1929. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and a combatant in the Rebel Army's Column Four. He died in the second battle of Pino del Agua on February 16, 1958.

NOGUERAS, JUAN: Combatant in the Rebel Army, but was discharged.

OLAZÁBAL CEPEDA, LUIS RAMÓN: Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, on August 21, 1926. He was a member of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP) and later of the July 26 Movement and was a member of Column Four, attaining the rank of captain by the end of the war.

OLTUSKI, ENRIQUE: Born in Havana on November 25, 1930. An engineer, he was a member of the July 26 Movement in Matanzas and Las Villas. He became a combatant in the Rebel Army, an officer in the FAR and minister of communications after the revolution.

OÑATE CAÑETE, ALEJANDRO (*CANTINFLAS*): Born in Manzanillo on May 3, 1936. He was a combatant in the Rebel Army and a member of Columns One and Four, and later Column Two under Commander Camilo Cienfuegos.

PAÍS GARCÍA, FRANK ISAAC (*DAVID* OR *CARLOS*): Born in Santiago de Cuba on December 7, 1934. He was president of the student association at his teacher's college and was active in various organizations, such as Acción Libertadora, Revolutionary National Movement (MNR), Oriente Revolutionary Action (ARO) and ANA. He was a founder and director of the action and sabotage section of the July 26 Movement and the leader of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba. He directed the November 30, 1956, uprising. He was assassinated in Callejón del Muro in Santiago on July 30, 1957, along with Raúl Pujol.

PAÍS GARCÍA, JOSUÉ: Born in Santiago de Cuba on December 28, 1937. He was Frank País's brother and an active participant in mass protests and student demonstrations as a member of the ANA and the Martí Student Bloc. He was a captain in the underground militia of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba and participated in the November 30 uprising. He was assassinated on June 30, 1957, in his hometown of Martí y Crombet.

PARDO GUERRA, BENJAMÍN (*MINGOLO*): Born on August 3, 1932, in El Cobre, Santiago de Cuba. He joined the Rebel Army in El Hombrito, as part of Column Four. He later fought on the Third Front under his brother Israel Pardo. He died in combat in Dos Palmas on January 4, 1958.

PARDO GUERRA, ISRAEL: A member of Columns One and Four of the Rebel Army, he later joined Column Three on the Third Front. He became a member of the FAR.

PARDO GUERRA, JOEL: A combatant in the Rebel Army and a member of Column Eight.

PARDO GUERRA, RAMÓN (*GUILE*) (b. 1939): Combatant in the Rebel Army from 1957. He was a member of Column Four and later joined Che's Column Eight. Today he is a division general in the FAR.

PARDO GUERRA, SAMUEL: A member of Column One of the Rebel Army, he later joined Column Three on the Third Front.

PAZ BORROTO, RAMÓN: Born in Morón, Ciego de Ávila, on August 31, 1924. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and joined the Rebel Army's Column One and later Column Eight. He died in the battle of Providencia during the second battle of Santo Domingo, July 28, 1958.

PAZOS BEHAR, JAVIER: Son of Felipe Pazos Roque. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and went to the Sierra Maestra on July 6, 1957, together with the doctor Julio Martínez Páez. He was captured on January 11, 1958,

along with Armando Hart Dávalos and Antonio Buch, and interned in Boniato prison. He went into exile in September 1960.

PAZOS ROQUE, FELIPE (b. 1912): Economist and former head of Cuba's National Bank under the Prío administration. He was a member of the Cuban Liberation Council (Junta de Liberación) in the United States and collaborated with the July 26 Movement, signing the Sierra Manifiesto in July 1957 and the Miami Pact in October 1958. After the revolution, he was president of the National Bank, but after he was replaced, he left for the United States in 1960.

PENA DÍAZ, FÉLIX: Born in Santiago de Cuba on March 26, 1930. He was a member of various political parties, including the Orthodox Party, Triple A and the July 26 Movement. He participated in the November 30, 1956, uprising in Santiago de Cuba. He was a member of the first contingent sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra, joining Column One, and later Columns Six and 18 on the Second Front. He attained the rank of commander and died on April 14, 1959.

PEÑA TORRES, HERMES: Combatant in the Rebel Army and member of Column Eight. He became an officer in the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and died on an internationalist mission.

PÉREZ, JOSÉ: He joined Che's Column Eight, but later deserted.

PÉREZ HERNÁNDEZ, FAUSTINO: Born in Guayos, Sancti Spíritus, on July 15, 1920. He was a doctor and member of the Revolutionary National Movement (MNR). Exiled in Mexico, he became a *Granma* expeditionary. He was head of action and sabotage in the July 26 Movement. After Alegría de Pío he was reunited with Fidel's group. On December 23, 1956, he left the Sierra Maestra to conduct underground actions. He rejoined the guerrillas in June 1958 in Column One and attained the rank of commander. After the revolution he held various government positions, including vice-president of the Council of Ministers. He was a member of the central committee of the Cuban Communist Party and deputy to the National Assembly, and died in Havana on December 24, 1992.

PÉREZ MONTANO, CRESCENCIO: Born in Pilón, Niquero, on April 19, 1895. From a young age he dedicated himself to the struggles of peasants persecuted by the Rural Guard. He was a founding member of the July 26 Movement and worked with Celia Sánchez in the preparations for the arrival of the *Granma*. He joined Column One and later led Column Seven

in the operational zone from Caracas Peak to Cabo Cruz. He was named as a commander on March 15, 1958. He died in Havana on October 16, 1986.

PÉREZ MONTANO, RAMÓN (*MONGO*): A peasant collaborator with the Rebel Army. He gave refuge to Fidel Castro and other *Granma* expeditionaries at his farm in Cinco Palmas after the rebels were dispersed at Alegría de Pío. He died in an accident in 1960.

PÉREZ RIGAR, PONCIANA (*LA VIEJA CHANA*): Peasant woman who collaborated with the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra.

PÉREZ ZAMORA, IGNACIO: Born in Niquero, Oriente province, on March 8, 1931. He was the son of Crescencio Pérez and a member of the July 26 Movement, who joined Column One. He attained the rank of captain. He died in the battle of San José del Retiro, Jiguaní, on December 19, 1958.

PESANT GONZÁLEZ, ADALBERTO (*BETO*): Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, on August 8, 1930. He was a member of the Orthodox Party and organizer of the July 26 Movement in Manzanillo. He joined Column One and attained the rank of captain. He died in an accident on Las Mercedes farm, August 8, 1959.

PONCE DÍAZ, JOSÉ: Born in Artemisa, Havana, on April 9, 1926. He was a member of the Orthodox Party and later of the July 26 Movement. He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks and was captured, tried and imprisoned. After the amnesty, he went into exile in Costa Rica and Mexico. He joined the *Granma* expedition, but after Alegría de Pío he was captured and held in prison on the Isle of Pines until the revolution.

PUPO PEÑA, PEDRO ORLANDO: Member of the first group of combatants sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He was a member of Column One and later Column Six on the Second Front.

QUESADA PÉREZ, FLORENTINO: Born in Colonia Estacadero, Niquero, Oriente province, on September 16, 1936. He joined the Rebel Army's Column One, but died in the second battle of Pino del Agua, February 16, 1958.

QUIROGA ESPINOSA, ANTOLÍN OLIMPO (*TITO*): Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, on July 26, 1927. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and fought on the First Front. He later became captain of the rearguard squadron of Column Nine on the Third Front. He was wounded in the second battle of Pino del Agua.

RAMOS LATOUR, RENÉ (*DANIEL*): Born in Antilla, Holguín, on May 12, 1932. He worked with the July 26 Movement in the northern towns of Mayarí,

Cauto, Antilla and Nicaro. He went to the Sierra Maestra on March 16, 1957. He became leader of the July 26 Movement in Oriente province after the death of Frank País, and later became a national leader of the movement. After the debacle of the April 1958 strike and the Mompié meeting on May 3, 1958, he returned to the Sierra Maestra as part of Column One. He attained the rank of commander. He died in the battle of El Jobal on July 30, 1958.

REDONDO GARCÍA, CIRO: Born in Artemisa, Havana, on December 9, 1931. A militant in the Orthodox Party Youth, he was an assailant on the Moncada barracks. Captured and imprisoned, he was amnestied on May 15, 1955. He joined the July 26 Movement and went into exile in Mexico. An expeditionary on the *Granma*, he became a member of the general staff of the Rebel Army and fought in Column Four. He attained the rank of captain. He died in the battle of Mar Verde on November 29, 1957. He was posthumously awarded the rank of commander.

REYES, GERARDO (*YAYO*): He was a member of the July 26 Movement and part of the first group sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He fought in Column One and later Column Six on the Second Front. He attained the rank of captain. He died in Santiago de Cuba on July 8, 1977.

REYES ROSALES, TEODORO: Combatant of the Rebel Army. He was a member of Column Eight, but deserted during the Las Villas campaign.

RIVERO, CONCEPCIÓN: Collaborator with the Rebel Army in Jibacoa, Oriente province.

RIVERO PEÑA, PEDRO: Born in Campechuela, Oriente province, on April 29, 1939. Member of Column Four. He died in the battle of Bueycito on August 1, 1957.

RODRÍGUEZ CORDOVÍ, GEONEL: Born in Manatí, Palma Soriano, May 10, 1934. He was a member of the July 26 Movement at the University of Havana. He joined Column Four and was given command of a platoon in Column One. He participated in the battle of Santo Domingo, June 30, 1958, and helped with the editing and printing of *El Cubano Libre*. He attained the rank of captain. He was hit by a mortar when he was already wounded and died in La Plata hospital, July 12, 1958.

RODRÍGUEZ CRUZ, RENÉ (*EL FLACO*/"*SKINNY*"): Born in Cárdenas, Matanzas, May 28, 1931. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and expeditionary on the *Granma*. On January 28, 1957, he left the Sierra

Maestra to engage in underground actions. He participated in the meeting at the farm of Epifanio Díaz in February, 1957. He was a member of Column Eight and became an officer in the FAR. He was a member of the central committee of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) and president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). He died in Havana on October 15, 1990.

RODRÍGUEZ FERNÁNDEZ, ROBERTO (*EL VAQUERITO*/"*LITTLE COWBOY*"): Born in Sancti Spíritus, on June 7, 1935. Member of Columns One and Four and captain of the "Suicide Squad" of Column Eight. He died in the action that captured the police headquarters in Santa Clara on December 30, 1958.

RODRÍGUEZ HERNÁNDEZ, HORACIO: Born in Cidra, Matanzas, on April 25, 1928. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. Exiled in Mexico, he became an expeditionary on the *Granma*. After the rebels were dispersed at Alegría de Pío he went underground and rejoined the Rebel Army on November 17, 1957. He was killed by Rolando Masferrer's paramilitary forces in Manzanillo on January 2, 1959.

RODRÍGUEZ MOYA, ARMANDO: He was a member of the July 26 Movement. Exiled in Costa Rica and Mexico, he joined the *Granma* expedition. He was a member of Column One but deserted after the action at Altos de Espinosa.

RODRÍGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ, LUIS ORLANDO (1912–89): He participated in the movement against the dictator Gerardo Machado as a leader of the Authentic Party Youth. He was a founding member of the Orthodox Party and then joined the July 26 Movement. He was the director of the newspaper *La Calle*. He joined Column Four in 1957 and became the director of *El Cubano Libre* and Radio Rebelde. He undertook several missions abroad, returning to the Sierra Maestra with arms in a plane in December 1958. He was named as a commander on December 28, 1958, and became a government minister from January to October 1959. He later served for decades in the Cuban diplomatic corps. He died in Havana, January 26, 1989.

RODRÍGUEZ DE LA VEGA, ADOLFO (*CUCO*): Combatant of the Rebel Army, doctor and outstanding fighter in the Las Villas campaign as a captain in Column Eight. He continued working with Che in La Cabaña after the revolution.

RODRÍGUEZ VIAMONTE, WILLLAM: Born in Arroyo Blanco de Guisa on May 1, 1931. He was a member of the Orthodox Party and later joined the July 26 Movement. He joined Column Four on June 22, 1957. On April 15,

1958, Fidel assigned him to command the area around Guisa, including the camp at Las Peñas. He participated in the battle of Guisa and remained there until the end of the war. He attained the rank of first lieutenant and died in Havana on August 3, 1983.

ROQUE NÚÑEZ, ROBERTO LEONARDO: Born in Palmira, Cienfuegos, on November 6, 1915. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and an expeditionary on the *Granma* as helmsman. After the rebels were dispersed at Alegría de Pío he was captured on December 12, 1956, and remained imprisoned until the revolution. He died in Havana on December 1, 1989.

RUIZ BORRERO, ROBERTO: Combatant on the First Front of the Rebel Army and later a member of Column Eight.

SABORIT RODRÍGUEZ, EVELIO (1939–75): Born in Bayamo, Oriente province, on February 22, 1939. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. In June 1957 he joined Column Four and later was a member of Column Three on the Third Front. He attained the rank of commander.

SALVADOR MANSO, DAVID (b. 1923): Member of the July 26 Movement and leader of its workers' section from 1957 to May 1958. At the Mompié meeting in May 1958 he was replaced by Antonio Torres (*Ñico*). He was general secretary of the Cuban Workers Confederation (CTC) from 1959 to 1960, when he was arrested and sentenced to 30 years in prison for counterrevolutionary activity.

SÁNCHEZ ÁLVAREZ, UNIVERSO: Born in San José de los Ramos, Matanzas, on May 22, 1919. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and an expeditionary on the *Granma*. After the rebels were dispersed at Alegría de Pío he was one of the two combatants who remained with Fidel. He achieved the rank of commander on December 28, 1958.

SÁNCHEZ MANDULEY, CELIA: Born in Media Luna on May 9, 1920. She actively supported the Moncada assailants while they were in prison and was the founder of the July 26 Movement in Manzanillo. She organized the plans for the arrival of the *Granma* expeditionaries and, together with Frank País, recruited the first group of reinforcements sent to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). From October 1957 she was a member of the general command, and after the revolution had various responsibilities in Fidel Castro's office. She died of cancer in Havana on January 11, 1980.

SÁNCHEZ WHITE, CALIXTO: Born in Glasgow, Scotland, February 3, 1924. He was a pilot, aviation mechanic and union leader. Having fought in World War II, he participated in the plans for the March 13, 1957, attack on the

presidential palace. Exiled in Miami, he organized and led the May 1957 expedition on the *Corynthia*. He was assassinated in Cabonico, Holguín, on May 28, 1957.

SANTAMARÍA CUADRADO, ALDO (1926–2008): Born in Encrucijada, Las Villas. He was imprisoned in 1956 as a leader of the July 26 Movement. After 1957 he joined the First Front of the Rebel Army and attained the rank of commander on December 28, 1958.

SANTAMARÍA CUADRADO, HAYDÉE (*YEYÉ*) (1922–80): Born in Encrucijada, Las Villas, on December 27, 1922. She was a member of the Orthodox Youth and carried out propaganda work distributing the underground papers *Son los Mismos* and *El Acusador*. She participated in the Moncada attack and was a nurse after the capture of the Saturnino Lora hospital. She was captured and imprisoned. On her release, she assisted the publication and distribution of Fidel's courtroom defence speech, "History will absolve me." She became a leader of the July 26 Movement and participated in the uprising of November 30, 1956. She joined Column One on the First Front, but was later assigned to work among Cuban exiles overseas. After the revolution, she was the founder and director of the cultural organization Casa de las Américas.

SARDIÑAS LABRADA, EDUARDO (*LALO*) (b. 1929): Born in Veguitas, Bayamo, Oriente province. He joined Column Four and later was the leader of Column 12 of the Fourth Front. He attained the rank of commander.

SARDIÑAS MENÉNDEZ, GUILLERMO (1916–64): Born in Sagua la Grande, Las Villas, on May 6, 1916. He was a Catholic priest and lawyer who joined the Rebel Army as a chaplain. He attained the rank of commander.

SILVA BERREA, JOSÉ RAMÓN: Member of Column Eight of the Rebel Army. He attained the rank of captain and later commander.

SIS NARANJO, TEODORO (*PELENCHO*): Peasant from Sierra Maestra, who lived next to Column Four's base at La Mesa. He later became a courier for the Rebel Army.

SORÍ MARÍN, HUMBERTO (1935–61): A member of the Rebel Army's Column One who became a commander on December 28, 1958. After the revolution he was minister of agriculture but then joined a counterrevolutionary group. He was captured and executed in 1961.

SOTO CUESTA, JUAN JORGE (1935–57): Born in Banes, Holguín. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and part of the first contingent of combatants sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*).

He joined Column One and was a captain at the time he died in combat on November 20, 1957. He was posthumously awarded the rank of commander.

SOTO HERNÁNDEZ, FRANCISCO (*EL POLICÍA*): Born in Morón, Ciego de Ávila, on March 17, 1921. A former member of the National Police, he was discharged under Batista. He became a member of the July 26 Movement in Banes and was part of the first contingent of reinforcements sent to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He died in the battle of El Uvero on May 28, 1957.

SOTOLONGO PÉREZ, ESTEBAN: Born in Placetas, Las Villas, on August 3, 1928. He was a member of the July 26 Movement. Exiled to Mexico in June 1956, he was an expeditionary on the *Granma*. After Alegría de Pío he rejoined the rebels on February 19, 1957. Due to ill health, from early May 1957 he worked in the underground movement until the revolution.

SOTOMAYOR ARCÍS, IBRAHIM: A peasant who helped the expeditionaries from the *Granma*.

SOTTO ALBA, PEDRO (*PEDRÍN*): Born in Bayamo, Oriente province, on December 27, 1935. He was a member of the July 26 Movement and an expeditionary on the *Granma*. After the rebels were dispersed at Alegría de Pío, he hid until he was able to join the Rebel Army with Frank País's first contingent of reinforcements (*los Marabuzaleros*). He was a member of Column One and later Columns Six and 19 on the Second Front. He died in the battle of Minas de Moa on June 26, 1958, and was posthumously awarded the rank of commander.

SOTÚS ROMERO, JORGE: He led the first contingent of combatants (*los Marabuzaleros*) sent to the Sierra Maestra by Frank País in March 1957. After 1959 he was imprisoned for counterrevolutionary activities. He died in Miami.

SUÁREZ LÓPEZ, JOSÉ A. (*PEPE*) (b. 1927): He participated in the attack on the Moncada barracks, and was subsequently captured and imprisoned. He was a member of the July 26 Movement in Cuba until December 1956, when he went into exile until the revolution.

SUÁREZ MARTÍNEZ, RAÚL: Born in Rodas, Cienfuegos, on October 12, 1935. He participated in the underground student struggle and was a member of the MNR (led by García Bárcenas) and the Orthodox Party. He joined the July 26 Movement and went into exile in Mexico. He was an expeditionary

on the *Granma*, and after Alegría de Pío he was captured and assassinated in Boca del Toro on December 8, 1956.

SUÑOL RICARDO, EDDY: Born in Holguín on August 10, 1926. He was a member of the Orthodox Party and later of the July 26 Movement in Santiago de Cuba. He fought in Column One and later became the leader of Column 14 of the Fourth Front. He attained the rank of commander. He died in Havana on July 2, 1971.

TAMAYO PEÑA, FÉLIX REY: Born in Jiguaní, Oriente province, on July 28, 1931. He was a member of Popular Socialist Party and later of the July 26 Movement. He fought in Column Four and attained the rank of lieutenant. He died in Havana on April 25, 1987.

TAMAYO TAMAYO, FRANCISCO AMADO (*PANCHO*) (1904–60): Born in Baire, Santiago de Cuba, on July 24, 1904. He lived in El Peladero near where the *Granma* landed in Oriente province. He was an effective collaborator with the guerrillas during the battle of El Uvero. He attained the rank of commander. He died in a clash with counterrevolutionaries led by Manuel Beatón on April 4, 1960.

TORRES CHEDEBEAU, ANTONIO (*ÑICO*): Railroad worker and national labor leader of the July 26 Movement in Guantánamo. He joined the Second Front, and in May 1958 replaced David Salvador as leader of the workers' section of the July 26 Movement, the National United Workers' Front. He died in Havana on October 3, 1991.

TORRES GONZÁLEZ, FÉLIX: Born in Yaguajay, Sancti Spíritus, on June 23, 1913. He joined the Popular Socialist Party (in 1934) and was secretary of the peasant movement in Yaguajay. He joined the Rebel Army on the northern front in Las Villas and attained the rank of commander.

TORRES GUERRA, HIPÓLITO (*POLO*): A peasant collaborator with Column Four. His farm in La Mesa became Che's headquarters at the end of 1957.

VALDÉS MENÉNDEZ, RAMIRO (*RAMIRITO*): Born in Artemisa, Havana, on April 28, 1932. One of the assailants on the Moncada barracks, he was captured, tried and imprisoned. Exiled to Mexico, he became an expeditionary on the *Granma*. In March 1957 he was appointed by Raúl Castro as the leader of a squadron with the rank of lieutenant. He transferred to Column Four with the rank of captain and became a commander on March 28, 1958. He remained in Column Four until Che sent him to Las Minas del Frío. He was named second-in-command of Column Eight and subsequently became a commander of the revolution.

VALLE JIMÉNEZ, SERGIO DEL (1927–2009): Member of the July 26 Movement and doctor in Columns One and Two.

VALLEJO ORTIZ, RENÉ CIRILO: Born in Manzanillo, Oriente province, March 29, 1920. He established La Caridad clinic in Manzanillo where he tended to the combatants and militants of the July 26 Movement. He joined Column One and was the director of the rebel hospital of Pozo Azul. He died in Havana on August 13, 1969.

VÁZQUEZ HIDALGO, RODOLFO: Combatant and member of Column Eight. He attained the rank of lieutenant.

VEGA VERDECIA, ANSELMO (*BOMBA* OR *EL BILLETERO*) (1907–57): Born in Vicana Arriba, Niquero, Oriente province. An agricultural worker in Pilón, he participated in the workers' struggles of the Orthodox Party. He joined the July 26 Movement and participated in the sabotage of the communications networks from Media Luna to Niquero in preparation for the landing of the *Granma* expedition. In April 1957 he joined Column One but died in the battle of El Uvero on May 28, 1957.

VERDECIA MORENO, ÁNGEL: Combatant in Column One. He attained the rank of captain. He died in the battle of Altos de Meriño on July 13, 1958.

VICIEDO PÉREZ, SEBASTIÁN (*POMPILIO*): A militant against Gerardo Machado, he was a member of Joven Cuba and fought in the Spanish Civil War. He was a member of the Orthodox Party, an underground activist in Sancti Spíritus and a member of Column Eight.

VIRELLES ÍÑIGUEZ, FERNANDO: Expeditionary on the *Corynthia*. He joined the First Front of the Rebel Army and attained the rank of captain.

WESTBROOK ROSALES, JOSÉ (*JOE*): Born in Havana on September 14, 1937, he was a member of the MNR (National Revolutionary Movement) led by García Bárcenas and was linked to the Civic Front of Martí Women. He was a founder of the Revolutionary Directorate. Along with José Antonio Echeverría he participated in discussions with Fidel in Mexico. He attacked the Radio Reloj radio station on March 13, 1957, and was assassinated at 7 Humboldt Street on April 20, 1957.

ZAYAS OCHOA, LUIS ALFONSO: Born in Puerto Padre, Holguín, on September 29, 1936. He was a member of the first contingent of combatants sent by Frank País to the Sierra Maestra (*los Marabuzaleros*). He joined Column One and later Che's Column Eight.

1. This name was derived from the thorny bush *marabú* that grows in abundance near Manzanillo, where the group first assembled before ascending the Sierra Maestra.

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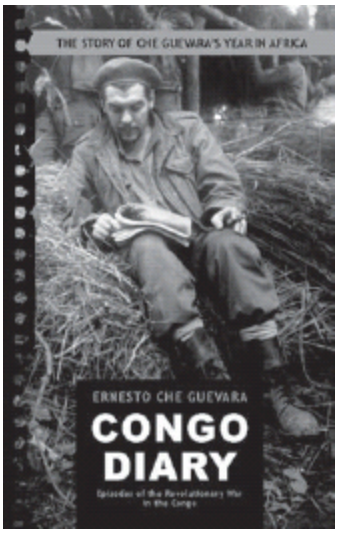

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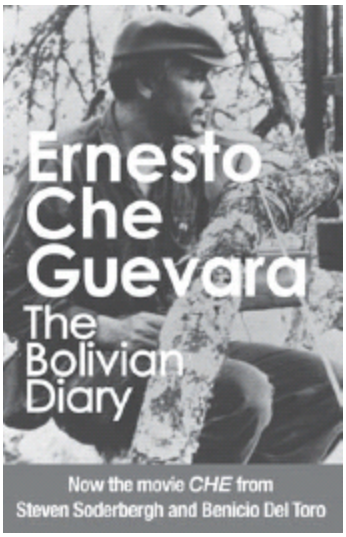

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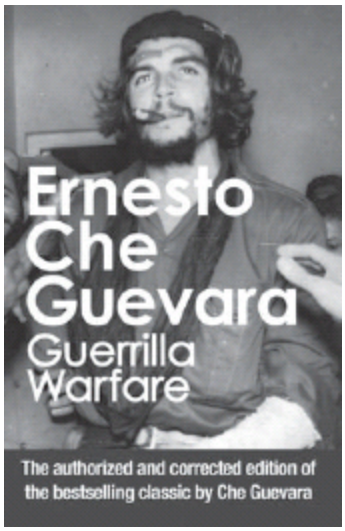

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